NEW

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PREMIER LEAGUE
ALL-STARS



8 AMAZING POSTERS INSIDE

WING WIZARDS

GOAL HEROES

GAME CHANGERS

MIDFIELD MAESTROS

OVER 70 OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS TO GRACE THE WORLD'S BEST LEAGUE

BALE • VAN DIJK • LAMPARD • CANTONA • VIEIRA • DE BRUYNE & MORE

Digital Edition

FUTURE

FIRST EDITION



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PREMIER LEAGUE ALL-STARS

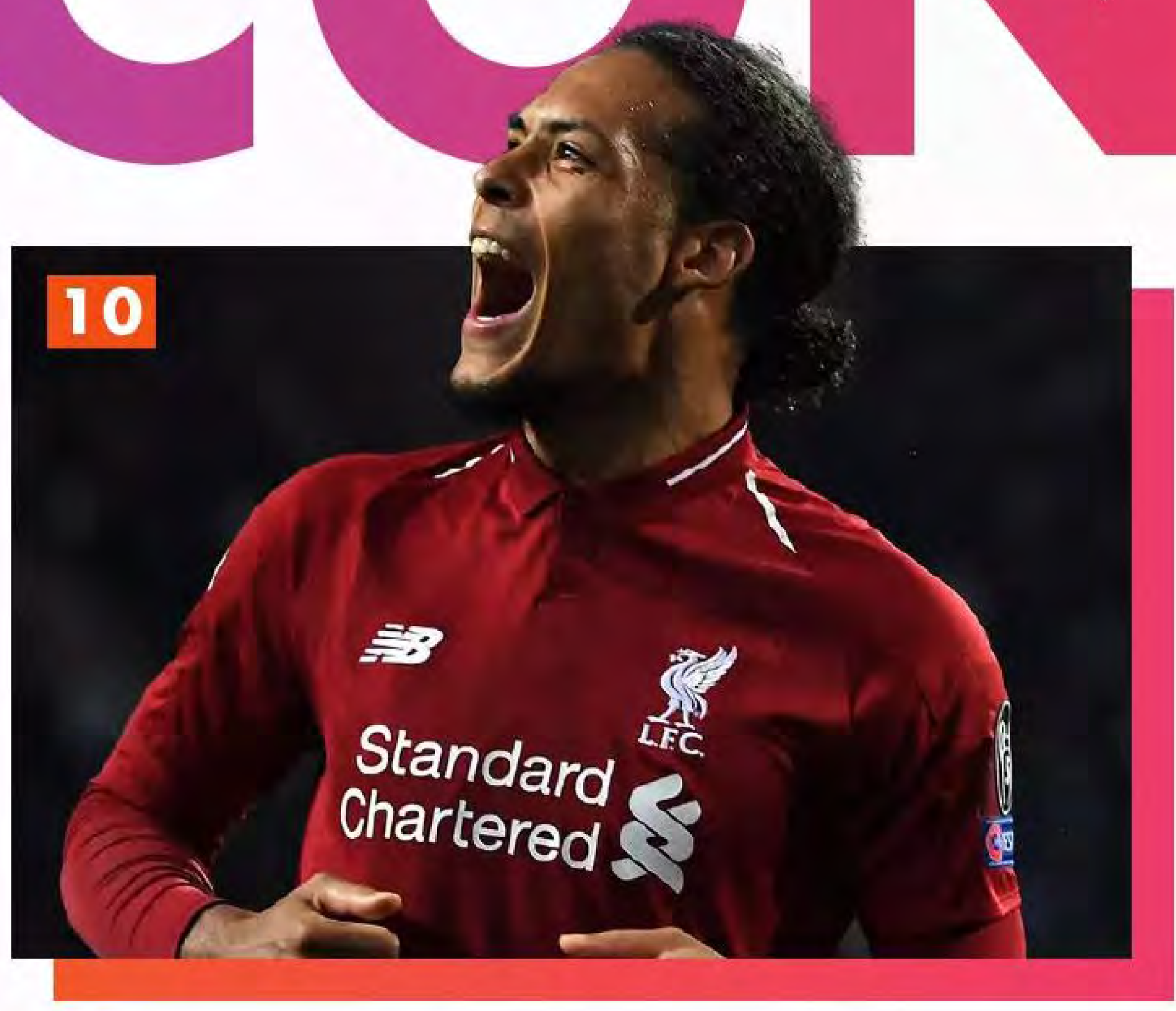
WELCOME

At 3pm on Saturday 15 August 1992, the Premier League kicked off for the very first time. Since then it's gone from strength to strength, evolving into the most exciting league on the planet, with an estimated fanbase of more than 1.87 billion worldwide. It's home to some of the game's most iconic stadiums and world-famous teams – and for more than three decades has attracted the very best players from around the globe.

In Premier League All-Stars, we celebrate some of the pioneers, game changers, record breakers and more who have left their mark on the competition – from the legends of the past to the current crop of superstars, you'll find fascinating facts, remarkable records and stunning stories on some of the very best shot-stoppers, defensive rocks, midfield maestros and goal machines the Premier League has ever seen. So turn the page to discover the creative genius of Martin Ødegaard and David Silva, the never-say-die attitude of Roy Keane, Patrick Vieira and Steven Gerrard, the goalscoring exploits of Alan Shearer, Thierry Henry and Erling Haaland, the homegrown heroics of Bukayo Saka, Phil Foden and Cole Palmer, and much, much more.

And that's not all – you'll also find eight eye-catching posters of your favourite Premier League heroes inside!

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THIERRY HENRY

Cast in bronze outside the Emirates, Henry produced truly golden moments for the Arsenal

On a flight in 1999, Juventus winger Thierry Henry bumped into his former manager at Monaco, Arsène Wenger. Wenger put a metaphorical arm around his protégé, insisting that he was a striker and shouldn't be playing on the flanks.

Henry didn't agree to begin with – but 175 Premier League goals later, how could he not now? The Frenchman injected some 'va va voom' into English football to become arguably the division's greatest-ever overseas export, not just scoring for fun but playing with the kind of reckless abandon that would inspire millions. Henry was a killer in front of goal, as well as an entertainer in front of fans, winning two titles and enrapturing the Arsenal faithful for eight very happy seasons.

In 2012, he'd come back for an encore. Henry had won a Champions League, worked with Pep Guardiola and played in America – but returned to the Premier League for a swansong with Arsenal, who'd erect a statue in his honour that year.

THE DERBY DESTROYER

Henry never lost a North London Derby in red and white, slaying Tottenham time and again. While he'd tell you his best moment came when Arsenal won the league at White Hart Lane, Gooners would argue that his slalom run against Spurs in 2002 was better. Henry scored the goal of the season that afternoon and celebrated in front of the opposing fans – a moment that was immortalised in his statue.



GAME CHANGER

THIERRY HENRY



BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 17 August 1977
BIRTHPLACE Paris, France
NATIONALITY French
HEIGHT 188cm (6'2")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Arsenal (1999-2007, 2012)
NUMBER 14

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x2 PREMIER LEAGUE
x2 FA CUP

% STATS & RECORDS

20 ASSISTS IN 2002-03, A JOINT PREMIER LEAGUE RECORD

49 GAMES UNBEATEN WITH ARSENAL IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE, A RECORD

175 GOALS IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE

FUN FACT

Henry scored 228 Arsenal goals – but he initially struggled and it took him nine games to score his first.



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Adrian Dennis / AFP via Getty **Boxout image** Ben Radford / Getty **Left** Shaun Botterill / Getty

A HIGHBURY HIGH

Henry was known as the 'King of Highbury', so the stadium's farewell was fittingly his stage and his alone. Arsenal went behind against Wigan in the final game of the 2005-06 season – but Gunners captain Henry scored a hat-trick to see the old ground off in fabulous style, kissing the turf when he scored a penalty with 14 minutes to go in a 4-2 win.





FUN FACT

Henry has more Golden Boots (four) than anyone else in Premier League history.

> "GUNNERS CAPTAIN HENRY SCORED A HAT-TRICK TO SEE THE OLD GROUND OFF IN FABULOUS STYLE"



TWIST AND SHOOT

As well as scoring for fun, Thierry Henry was also one of the best creators of his era, becoming the first player to record 20 Premier League assists in 2002-03 – and he was so good at it that he could even assist himself. In 2000, the ball came to the Frenchman on the edge of the Highbury penalty box: he flicked it up and volleyed it over Manchester United goalkeeper Fabian Barthez. It was a stunning goal – and one that's still remembered today as a Premier League great.

49 GUN SALUTE

Arsenal's run of 49 games unbeaten remains the Premier League's longest-ever sequence without defeat, with Henry the chief architect behind so many of those games. The Frenchman came alive in that run, spurred on by previous failures to win the league and the Ballon d'Or: he'd score 30 times in the 2003-04 campaign and win the Premier League Player of the Season to cement himself as a league legend.





Images Shutterstock; **Images (clockwise from top left)** Stuart MacFarlane / Arsenal FC via Getty; Mark Leech / Offside / Getty; Stuart MacFarlane / Arsenal FC via Getty x2

VIRGIL VAN DIJK

A true modern great, van Dijk is one of the best centre-backs of his – or anyone else's – generation

Some baulked at the £75 million that Liverpool splashed on Virgil van Dijk when he arrived at Anfield. The Dutchman had been solid at Southampton – but became the most expensive defender ever when he left the south coast.

It didn't take long for van Dijk to silence the critics, with a goal on his debut in the FA Cup and game-changing performances in his first campaign. Van Dijk helped organise the Reds' backline – which had looked shaky prior to his arrival – as Liverpool became a force to be reckoned with. Over time, the transfer fee looked to be a bargain.

Van Dijk would win everything at Anfield as part of one of the most stringent backlines that the Premier League had ever seen. It's even been argued by some that van Dijk's considerable peak is the highest that English football has ever seen: at his best, he was incomparable, winning the ball with ease. He's still playing – but he's certainly one of the greatest that Premier League fans have ever had the pleasure to witness.

LIVERPOOL'S LOCKDOWN LEADER

Liverpool waited 30 years to win a title. When it finally arrived, it came during the pandemic of 2020, with van Dijk as perhaps the defining figure of the achievement, alongside Mohamed Salah. Van Dijk was superb all season at the back, helping the Reds to an incredible 99 points, remaining unbeaten at home in the league for the third season in a row. He's been just as brilliant ever since.





DEFENSIVE ROCK

DEFENSIVE ROCK



FUN FACT

In his youth, van Dijk had a part-time job as a dishwasher to make money while playing football.

VIRGIL VAN DIJK

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 8 July 1991
BIRTHPLACE Breda, Netherlands
NATIONALITY Dutch
HEIGHT 195cm (6'5")
POSITION Defender
PL TEAMS Southampton (2015-18), Liverpool (2018-present)
NUMBER 4

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- **x1** PREMIER LEAGUE
- **x1** FA CUP
- **x2** LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **102** NUMBER OF PREMIER LEAGUE CLEAN SHEETS
- **1** NUMBER OF DEFEATS IN HIS FIRST 90 GAMES AT ANFIELD
- **84** NUMBER OF MINUTES IT TOOK TO SCORE ON HIS LIVERPOOL DEBUT



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Paul Ellis / Getty **Boxout image** PRIME Media Images / Alamy **Left** Anthony Devlin Photography / Alamy

COLE PALMER

England's new kid on the block has taken the Premier League by storm, and he's only just getting started

The phrase 'old head on young shoulders' is one that can be readily applied to Cole Palmer. Still in his early twenties, he has displayed both the confidence to deem himself worthy of more than his impact-sub role at Manchester City, and the maturity to become Chelsea's most dependable player.

While some questioned the wisdom of swapping Pep Guardiola's guiding hand for Chelsea's bloated squad, Palmer has wasted no time showing what he can do. Having hit the ground running, his skill on the ball and cool head at set pieces has helped to ensure his status as a leading light in a disappointing campaign for the club.

The 2023-24 season's post-mortem makes for promising reading: topping the league for combined goals and assists with 33, taking home the Premier League Young Player of the Season and PFA Fans' Player of the Year accolades, and earning an England call-up to boot. And to think, he's only just begun...

FUN FACT

As a child, Palmer turned down Manchester United to sign for City.



SETTLING THE SCORE

Palmer left Manchester City with a point to prove, so when his old club visited Stamford Bridge on 12 November 2023, he set about proving it, imposing himself on the game at every opportunity. It wasn't until injury time, however, that he was able to truly show them what they were missing, keeping his nerve to slot home a late penalty and level the scores at 4-4. Next time, he'll hope to go one better.

CREATIVE FORCE



COLE PALMER

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	6 May 2002
BIRTHPLACE	Manchester, England
NATIONALITY	English
HEIGHT	189cm (6'2")
POSITION	Forward
PL TEAMS	Manchester City (2020-23), Chelsea (2023-present)
NUMBER	20

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1	PREMIER LEAGUE
x1	FA CUP

STATS & RECORDS

22	LEAGUE GOALS IN HIS FIRST SEASON AT CHELSEA
33	GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2023-24 – THE HIGHEST IN THE LEAGUE
0.65	PL GOALS PER MATCH IN 2023-24

Above Since joining Chelsea, Palmer's career has gone from strength to strength



Right His 'shivering' celebration is a nod to his nickname of 'Cold' Palmer

Images Shutterstock; **Main Image** Craig Thomas / News Images / Alamy **Boxout Image** MatchDay Images Limited / Alamy **Left** David Klein / Sportimage / Alamy

CRISTIANO RONALDO

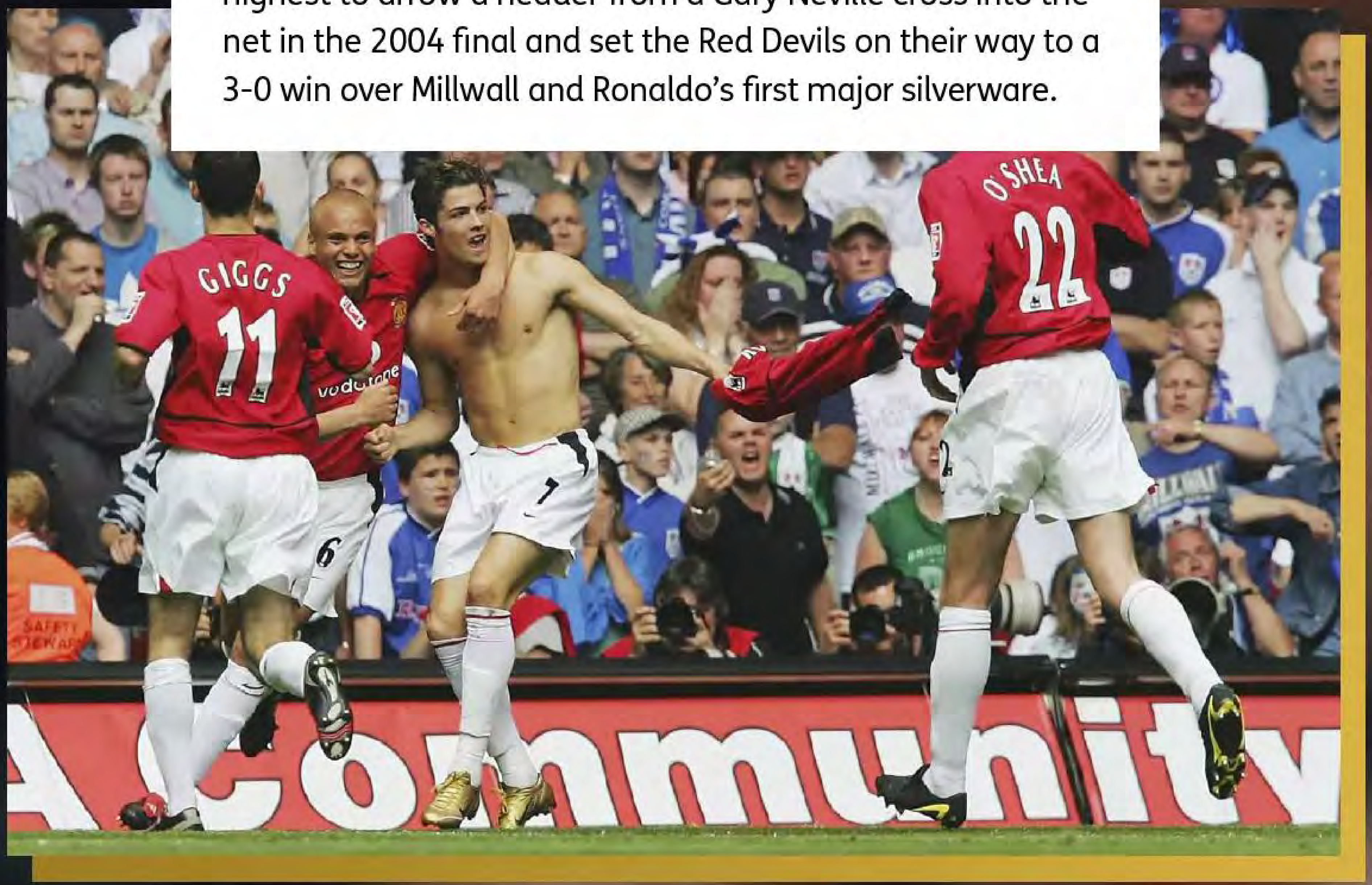
He arrived in England as a skinny young winger with magic in his boots and a lot to learn. He would leave it as the greatest player on Earth

There are a select few players who possess such superhuman talent, such relentless ambition, that they bend the game to their indomitable will. Cristiano Ronaldo is one such player. Utterly determined to reach the very top, the former Sporting Lisbon academy graduate joined Manchester United in 2003 after dazzling Alex Ferguson's charges in a preseason friendly. He would spend six glorious years at Old Trafford, a stage he lit up with marauding runs, sublime strikes and a will to win that drove United to glory at home and abroad.

Famed for his lethal free-kicks and aerial prowess, he honed his mind and body into the ultimate sporting machine, one able to return to the Theatre of Dreams in 2021 after spells at Real Madrid and Juventus and continue to score crucial goals for a side, which by that point, was a shadow of the team Ronaldo remembered. Fans of other teams will have their favourites, but many will argue he is the finest player ever to grace the PL.

BORN FOR THE BIG STAGE

Even as a fresh-faced teenager, Ronaldo was never one to be overawed by a big occasion, and they don't come much bigger than your first FA Cup final. In a sign of the many goals he would go on to score, the nimble youngster rose highest to arrow a header from a Gary Neville cross into the net in the 2004 final and set the Red Devils on their way to a 3-0 win over Millwall and Ronaldo's first major silverware.



"FAMED FOR HIS LETHAL FREE-KICKS AND AERIAL PROWESS, HE HONED HIS MIND AND BODY INTO THE ULTIMATE SPORTING MACHINE"



WING WIZARD

CRISTIANO RONALDO

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 5 February 1985
BIRTHPLACE Madeira, Portugal
NATIONALITY Portuguese
HEIGHT 187cm (6'2")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Manchester United (2003-09, 2021-22)
NUMBER 7

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x3	PREMIER LEAGUE
x1	FA CUP
x2	LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

31	PL GOALS SCORED IN 2007-08, MOST BY A MAN UTD PLAYER
12	FREE-KICKS SCORED IN LEAGUE, JOINT THIRD FOR PL FREE-KICK GOALS
6,917	DAYS BETWEEN FIRST AND LAST PL GOAL FOR UNITED

FUN FACT

Ronaldo scored Man United's 1,000th PL goal, which came against Middlesbrough on 29 October 2004.



Images Shutterstock; **Main Image** Paul Ellis / AFP via Getty **Boxout Image** John Peters / Manchester United via Getty **Left** PA Images / Alamy



PICK THAT OUT

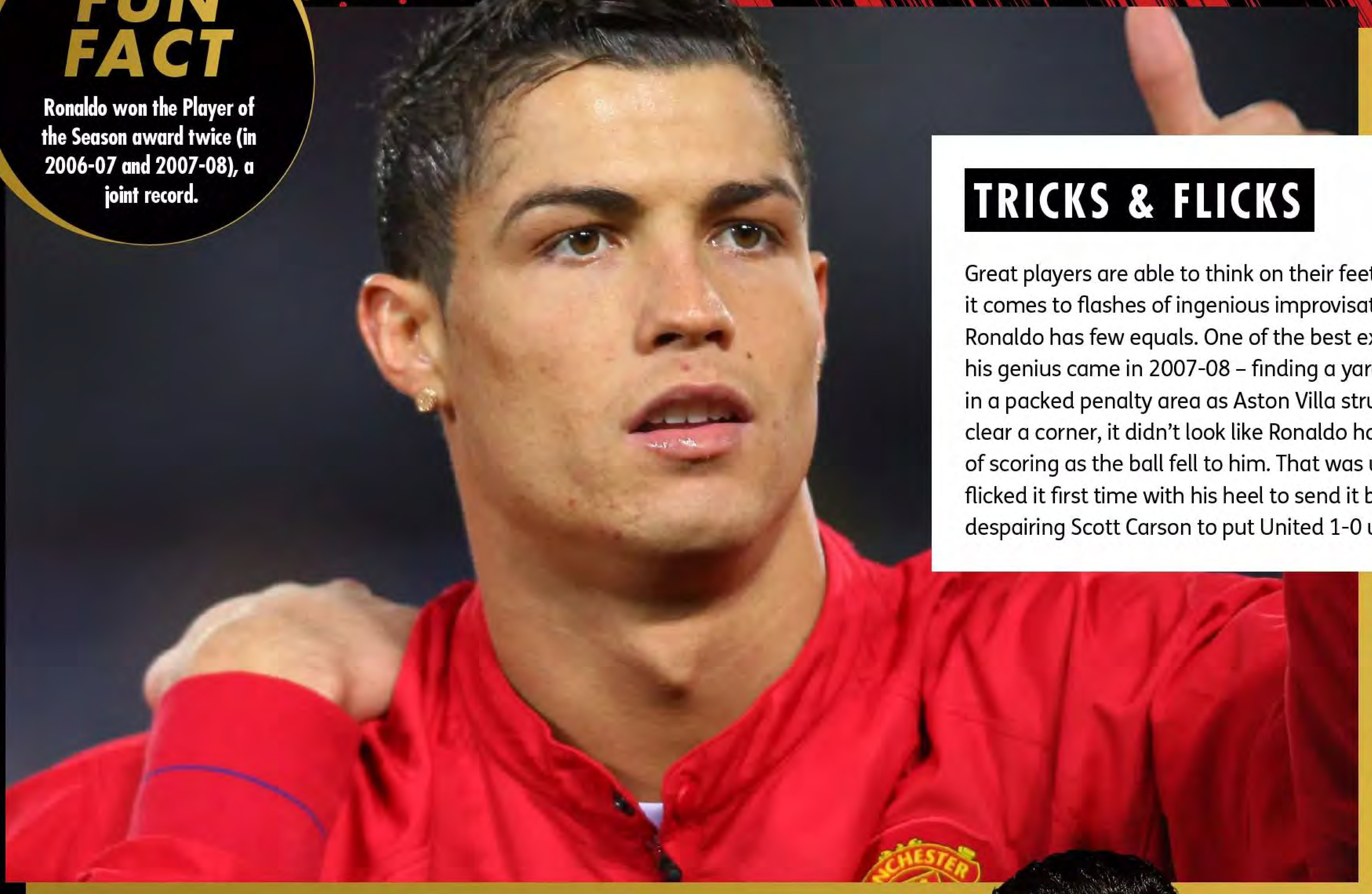
Of all the goals Ronaldo scored for United, his audacious free-kick in January 2008 at home to Portsmouth midway through what would prove to be a league and Champions League-winning season, was arguably the best of the lot. A brilliant combination of power, placement and confidence saw CR7 smash the ball up and over the Pompey wall and into the top corner of David James's net, the former England stopper left with no option but to marvel at an unstoppable strike.

FUN FACT

Ronaldo scored 103 PL goals, 11 of which were headers.

FUN FACT

Ronaldo won the Player of the Season award twice (in 2006-07 and 2007-08), a joint record.



TRICKS & FLICKS

Great players are able to think on their feet, and when it comes to flashes of ingenious improvisation, Ronaldo has few equals. One of the best examples of his genius came in 2007-08 – finding a yard of space in a packed penalty area as Aston Villa struggled to clear a corner, it didn't look like Ronaldo had any hope of scoring as the ball fell to him. That was until he flicked it first time with his heel to send it beyond a despairing Scott Carson to put United 1-0 up.

RETURN OF *THE KING*



They say you should never go back to a place where you've been happy, but the United faithful were certainly relieved to see Ronaldo return to the Old Trafford in the summer of 2021. An exquisite hat-trick against Spurs marked the high point of his brief second spell, a treble that secured a 3-2 victory and served as a timely reminder that an evergreen CR7 still had plenty to offer.

Images Shutterstock; **Clockwise from main image** Paul Ellis / AFP via Getty; Aflo Co., Ltd. / Alamy; Ash Donelon / Manchester United via Getty

GARETH BALE

The Welsh Wizard who overcame a stuttering start to become the world's most expensive footballer

In 2007, Tottenham signed 17-year-old left-back Gareth Bale from Southampton for a fee of just £5 million, off the back of some impressive performances for the south coast club. He struggled to force his way into the team but finally got a run of starts in the second half of 2009-10. Bale endeared himself to the Spurs faithful by scoring in back-to-back fixtures against Arsenal and Chelsea and never looked back. He announced himself on the European stage with a hat-trick against Inter Milan in the Champions League and developed a knack of scoring late, spectacular goals that helped Tottenham become regular top four candidates. He won a PFA Players' Player of the Year and Premier League Player of the Season double in 2012-13, after netting 21 league goals, attracting the attention of Spanish giants Real Madrid. Spurs chairman Daniel Levy played hardball, eventually letting Bale go for a world record £85 million. After seven trophy-laden seasons at Real, he returned for one more season at Spurs, before heading off to the MLS and retirement.

BOXING DAY TREAT

It was Boxing Day in that famous 2012-13 season and Tottenham were away to Aston Villa. After Jermain Defoe's opener, Bale intercepted a pass, rounded Brad Guzan and scored. Twelve minutes later he fired in his second and 11 minutes after that a finish into the roof of the net secured a slightly late Christmas present – a 23-minute Premier League hat-trick



Right Bale returned to Tottenham in the 2020-21 season – scoring 11 goals as Spurs finished seventh

WELSH WIZARD



WING WIZARD

FUN FACT

It took Bale 25 games to earn his first Premier League win – as an 85th-minute substitute.

GARETH BALE

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 16 July 1989
BIRTHPLACE Cardiff, Wales
NATIONALITY Welsh
HEIGHT 186cm (6'1")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Tottenham Hotspur (2007-13, 2020-21)
NUMBER 11

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

25 PL GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2012-13

0.64 PL GOALS PER GAME IN 2012-13

9 GOALS FROM OUTSIDE THE BOX IN 2012-13, A PREMIER LEAGUE RECORD



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Sang Tan / Associated Press / Alamy **Boxout image** Lefteris Pitarakis / Associated Press / Alamy **Left** David Klein / Sportimage / Associated Press / Alamy

JACK GREALISH

Man City's maverick maestro continues to keep the party going

Football needs its entertainers. In Jack Grealish, it has one who steals the show not just for his ability on the ball, but for his infectious personality. At times, it seems like you're almost as likely to hear his name in relation to his prolonged celebrations after another trophy-laden season at Manchester City than to football. This is a shame, as there are few players like him.

Having galvanised Aston Villa's return to the Premier League and subsequent consolidation of their top-flight status, he quickly became one of its leading lights thanks to his mesmerising dribbling ability that allows him to ghost past opponents like they aren't there. Few teams resisted resorting to the dark arts to take him down.

While he has at times struggled to stand out in a City side packed with the world's greats, when he's on song, few can match him. We hope to see him light up the Etihad for many more years to come.

FUN FACT

Grealish follows in the footsteps of his great-great grandfather, Billy Garraty, who not only played for Aston Villa, but was also capped by England.



TREBLE WINNER

Having struggled to nail down a place in his maiden season, the following campaign saw him go some way towards justifying his price tag, and then some. Garnering 50 appearances in all competitions (the fifth highest of the City squad), he played starring roles in both subsequent final victories over Man Utd and Inter Milan in the FA Cup and Champions League. It's probably fair to say that few enjoyed this success as much as he did.

WING WIZARD

WING WIZARD



Above Grealish has taken his place at the top with Man City

Right For years, Grealish was Aston Villa's talisman and leading light

JACK GREALISH

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 10 September 1995
BIRTHPLACE Birmingham, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 180cm (5'11")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Aston Villa (2012-21), Manchester City (2021-present)
NUMBER 10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x3 PREMIER LEAGUE

x1 FA CUP

STATS & RECORDS

167 NUMBER OF TIMES HE WAS FOULED IN 2019-20 – MOST IN THAT SEASON

100 MILLION (£) – TRANSFER FEE WHEN CITY SIGNED HIM FROM ASTON VILLA

320 AVERAGE DISTANCE (M) HE CARRIED THE BALL PER GAME IN 2022-23



TOP 10 MANAGERS

Meet the men who assembled the best sides in Premier League history

No matter how many internationals and superstars a club boasts on its payroll, even the best players must be moulded into a cohesive team by the manager. Some bosses motivated their charges with words of wisdom. Others used masterful tactics to get the best out of their team. Whether they built through the youth system or splashed the cash in the transfer market, these are the best to have prowled the sidelines.



ALEX FERGUSON

Ferguson's 26-year stint with Manchester United was spectacularly successful, making him the manager with more top-flight trophies than any other in world football. It's amazing to think that he was nearly sacked after three years thanks to a slow start, but Ferguson rallied and created the youth-oriented Class of '92. After winning his first title with Beckham et al, Ferguson assembled several more legendary sides that combined to win 13 Premier League titles.

IMAGE - © Mark Leech/Offside / Getty



JÜRGEN KLOPP

Klopp's Liverpool sides would probably have dominated the Premier League had it not been for Manchester City. Instead, Klopp's reign at Anfield ended with just one league title. Liverpool were runners-up in 2018-19 with a mammoth 97 points, missing out by a point despite gaining the third-highest points total in Premier League history at the time. But Klopp proved to be a dab hand in Europe, winning the Champions League in 2019 and reaching the final twice more.

IMAGE - © Mark Pain / Alamy

PEP GUARDIOLA

When Guardiola joined Manchester City in 2016, the club had almost unlimited financial resources but were struggling to transform cash into trophies. Guardiola changed all that. He encouraged his expensive stars to concentrate on the fundamentals like keeping possession, and it paid off. Guardiola's teams won two Premier League titles in 2018 and 2019, then an unprecedented four in a row from 2021. Under Guardiola, City have collected more than 90 points on four occasions and even managed a record 100 points in 2018.

IMAGE - © Mark Pain / Alamy



ARSÈNE WENGER

A deep-thinking manager known as 'The Professor', most Arsenal fans hadn't heard of former Monaco boss Wenger when he arrived at Highbury in 1996. Gunners fans soon found out that Wenger was a tactical genius. Arsenal won league and FA Cup doubles in 1998 and 2002, and his third Premier League title came courtesy of 'The Invincibles' – who managed to stay undefeated in all 38 league matches.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy

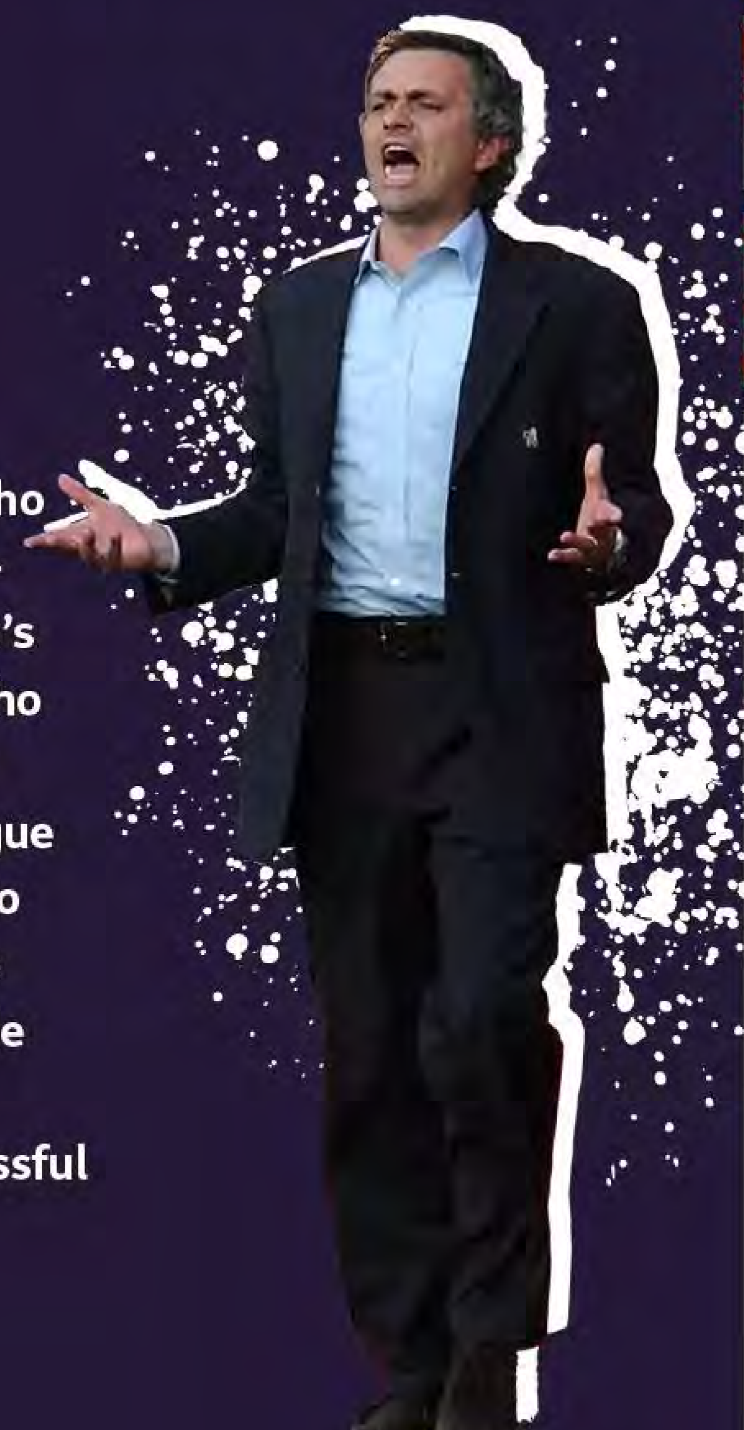




CLAUDIO RANIERI

Over four seasons, Ranieri gradually improved his Chelsea team until they finished 2004 in second place. Despite their best-ever points total at the time, Ranieri lost his job in favour of José Mourinho. But nobody expected that Ranieri would go one better and win the Premier League with his next English club: Leicester City. After narrowly avoiding relegation, the Foxes put together a miraculous season in one of the biggest shocks in sport history.

IMAGE - © Simon Bellis / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy



JOSÉ MOURINHO

Before Manchester City, it was Chelsea who were the Premier League's big spenders – and the manager who controlled the club's bulging wallet was Mourinho. The man who called himself the 'Special One' won two Premier Leagues, an FA Cup and two League Cups in three seasons before moving on to pastures new, and the nomadic existence became a feature of Mourinho's career. He also managed Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur and had a less-successful second stint with Chelsea.

IMAGE - © Mike Walker / Alamy



DAVID MOYES

Moyes was the man chosen to take on an impossible mission: succeeding Ferguson at Manchester United. He failed to live up to United fans' high expectations, but prior to Old Trafford, Moyes had transformed Everton from relegation battlers into a consistent top-eight team. Moyes turned around another struggling club when he joined West Ham United, guiding them to two top-seven finishes and victory in the Europa Conference League in 2023.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy



RAFAEL BENÍTEZ

After cutting his teeth as a manager in Spain, Benítez joined Liverpool in 2004 and had an immediate impact, winning the Champions League in his first season. But Benítez was hard to please. He was ruthless in his quest for success, dropping penalty-shootout hero Jerzy Dudek and moving on from club legends Jamie Carragher and Steven Gerrard when he felt their time was up. After leaving Liverpool, Benítez went on to have stints with Chelsea, Newcastle United and Everton.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy

KENNY DALGLISH



Although Dalglish's peak years as a Liverpool manager were already behind him when the Premier League was formed in 1992, he returned to Anfield for a season and a half in 2011 and won the FA Cup. His biggest Premier League achievement was winning the title with Blackburn Rovers, however. Dalglish put together a strong side featuring Alan Shearer up front, and Rovers were crowned champions during a nail-biting last day.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy

MAURICIO POCHETTINO



Pochettino made an immediate Premier League impact when he led Southampton to their best league finish for ten years. That caught the eye of Tottenham Hotspur, who appointed Pochettino as their tenth manager in 12 years, and he halted the slide in North London. Pochettino transformed Spurs into title contenders and took them to the final of the Champions League in 2019, although he never succeeded in winning a trophy with the Premier League's perennial bridesmaids.

IMAGE - © Kim Chen / Alamy

FUN FACT
Erling Haaland's father, Alf-Inge Haaland, played in the Premier League for Leeds United.

ERLING HAALAND

His goalscoring rate is phenomenal and he's spent his time in the Premier League smashing one record after another



Right Haaland is already regarded as one of the best strikers in the world

Erling Haaland has superb movement whether on or off the ball. He is adept at blindsiding defenders, giving him an advantage, and his blistering pace allows him to be a good few steps ahead. He can get to the ball in rapid time and, thanks to his height, tower over the opposition. And, most of all, he can score. Loads. In fact, in 66 appearances across his first two seasons at Manchester City, he scored 63 goals. Haaland is a true goal machine.

Little surprise then that his debut season in England was so successful. He scored 36 times in the Premier League, a competition record, easing his club to the title, then helped to add the FA Cup and Champions League. And while his form dipped in his second season, he still finished with 27 Premier League goals. He is currently on course to set targets that others will be trying to reach for years. A modern icon in the making.

GOAL HERO



HAILING A HERO

Haaland arrived at Manchester City from Dortmund for a fee of £52 million, however reports suggest that with performance-related add-ons, that fee could actually exceed £85 million. But, given his goalscoring returns, City would likely consider him worth every penny. Besides, according to **transfermarkt.com**, as of July 2024 he is valued at around £150 million.

> *"HE IS CURRENTLY ON COURSE TO SET TARGETS THAT OTHERS WILL BE TRYING TO REACH FOR YEARS"*

ERLING HAALAND

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 21 July 2000
BIRTHPLACE Leeds, England
NATIONALITY Norwegian
HEIGHT 194cm (6'4")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Manchester City (2022-present)
NUMBER 9

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x2 PREMIER LEAGUE
x1 FA CUP

STATS & RECORDS

0.95 GOALS PER PREMIER LEAGUE GAME
49% SHOOTING ACCURACY
52 MOST GOALS IN A SEASON IN ALL COMPETITIONS BY A PL PLAYER



Images Shutterstock; **Main Image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout Image** Dave Thompson / Associated Press / Alamy **Left** Mark Pain / Alamy

FAST TRACK HAT-TRICKS



It only took Haaland 20 days to score his first hat-trick and that came on 27 August 2022 in a 4-2 victory against Crystal Palace. But if Manchester City thought they'd have a similar wait for the next one, they'd have been wrong: it took him just four days to bag a second hat-trick, this time in a 6-0 win against Nottingham Forest. No player has ever scored two hat-tricks in such a short timeframe. He ended up scoring three Premier League hat-tricks in just eight games.

FUN FACT

Haaland became the first player to appear on the cover of the *EA Sports FC* videogame.





HOW QUICK?

Alan Shearer scored 50 Premier League goals after 66 games. Andrew Cole scored 50 Premier League goals after 65 games. Haaland achieved that same half-century of goals on 25 November 2023 against Liverpool after just 48 games, becoming the quickest player to ever do so. Of those, 33 were scored with his left foot.





Left Erling Haaland celebrated back-to-back Premier League title wins with Manchester City in 2024 – the club's fourth in a row

"A DEDICATION TO MEDITATION COULD BE ONE OF THE REASONS WHY HAALAND APPEARS TO BE ABLE TO KEEP A COOL HEAD IN FRONT OF GOAL"

STAYING CALM

A dedication to meditation could be one of the reasons why Haaland appears to be able to keep a cool head in front of goal. As well as trying to remain as stress-free as possible, he also ensures he gets nine hours of quality sleep each night, even turning off the Wi-Fi to allow him to focus.

DENNIS BERGKAMP

One of the most graceful players in Premier League history, Dennis Bergkamp is still revered as a legend today

The first Arsenal teammate that Dennis Bergkamp met in English football was a total coincidence. While filling up his car at a petrol station on the outskirts of London, the Dutchman bumped into an excited Ian Wright, who embraced him and welcomed him to the club.

Bergkamp had a similar effect on everyone who saw him. The 'Non-Flying Dutchman', as he was nicknamed due to a fear of flying, would inspire fans, teammates and even opponents with the same childlike wonder that Wrighty felt that afternoon – whether it was with a goal, assist or just a flick.

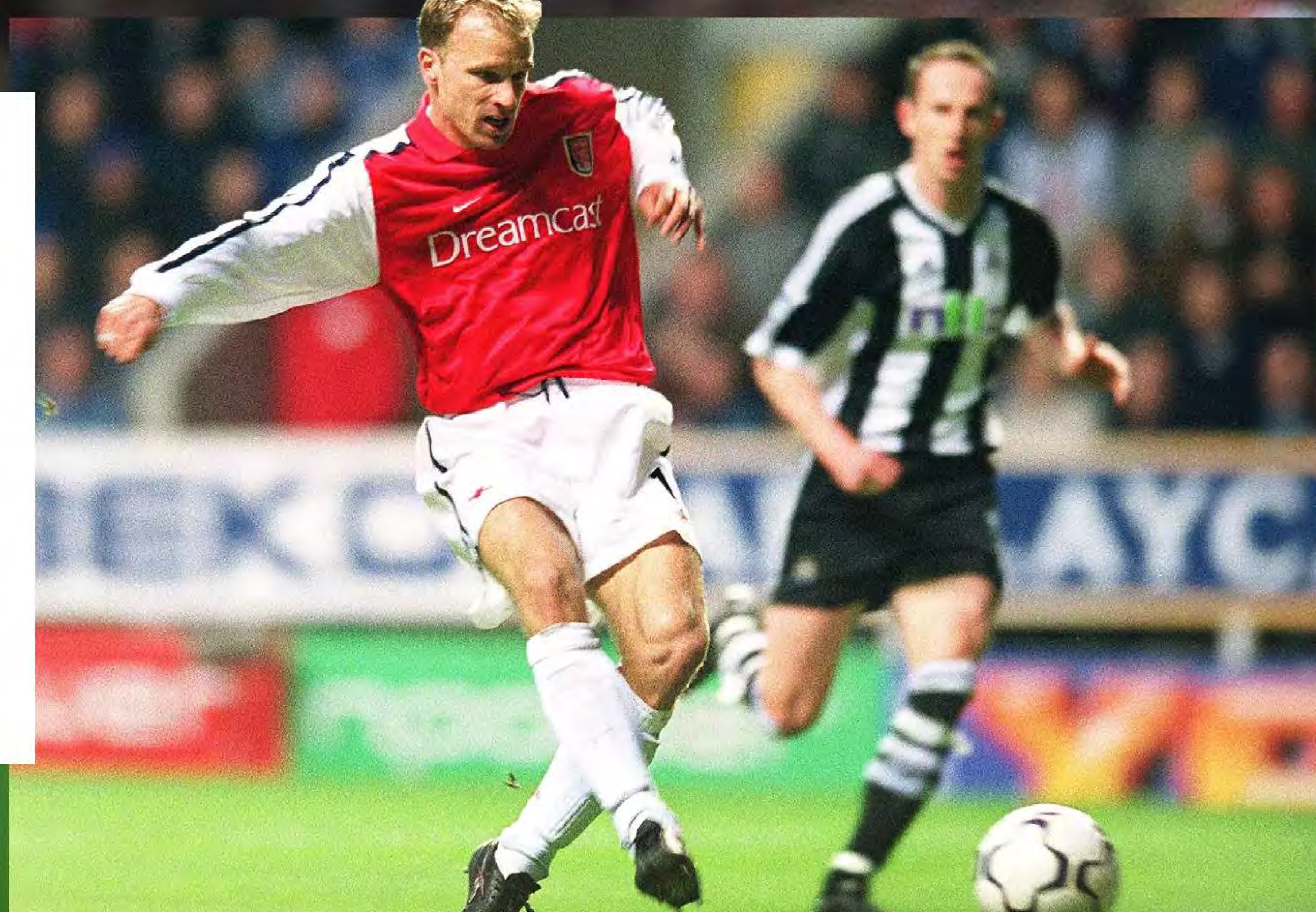
There has arguably never been anyone like him since. Bergkamp had a velvet touch, an unrivalled ability on the ball and a fiery intensity to win that made him a perfect fit for the English game. He's perhaps the player who transformed Arsenal's 'boring, boring' image into that of the best footballing side in the league.


FUN FACT

Bergkamp suffers from severe aviophobia – fear of flying – so used to travel to European away games by car.

GOAL OF THE CENTURY

In 2017, Bergkamp's 2002 goal against Newcastle was voted as the greatest in Premier League history – it's easy to see why. When a Robert Pires pass bounced just behind the Dutchman, he flicked the ball with his left foot around defender Nikos Dabizas and collected the ball after a 180-degree turn to score against the Magpies. And yes: he later confirmed that he did mean it.





GAME CHANGER

DENNIS BERGKAMP

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 10 May 1969
BIRTHPLACE Amsterdam, Netherlands
NATIONALITY Dutch
HEIGHT 183cm (6')
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Arsenal (1995-2006)
NUMBER 10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x3 PREMIER LEAGUE
x4 FA CUP


STATS & RECORDS

3 GOALS IN THE TOP THREE OF THE BBC'S GOAL OF THE MONTH IN 1997-98
0.93 PL GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS PER 90 MINS IN 1998-99
315 PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES



"BERGKAMP HAD A VELVET TOUCH, AN UNRIVALLED ABILITY ON THE BALL AND A FIERY INTENSITY TO WIN THAT MADE HIM PERFECT FOR THE ENGLISH GAME"

Images Shutterstock; **Main image** David Price / Arsenal FC via Getty **Boxout image** Stuart MacFarlane / Arsenal FC via Getty **Left** David Price / Arsenal FC via Getty



"TRENT TOOK ADVANTAGE OF AN INJURY TO NATHANIEL CLYNE, AND QUICKLY ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE BEST RIGHT-BACKS IN THE LEAGUE"

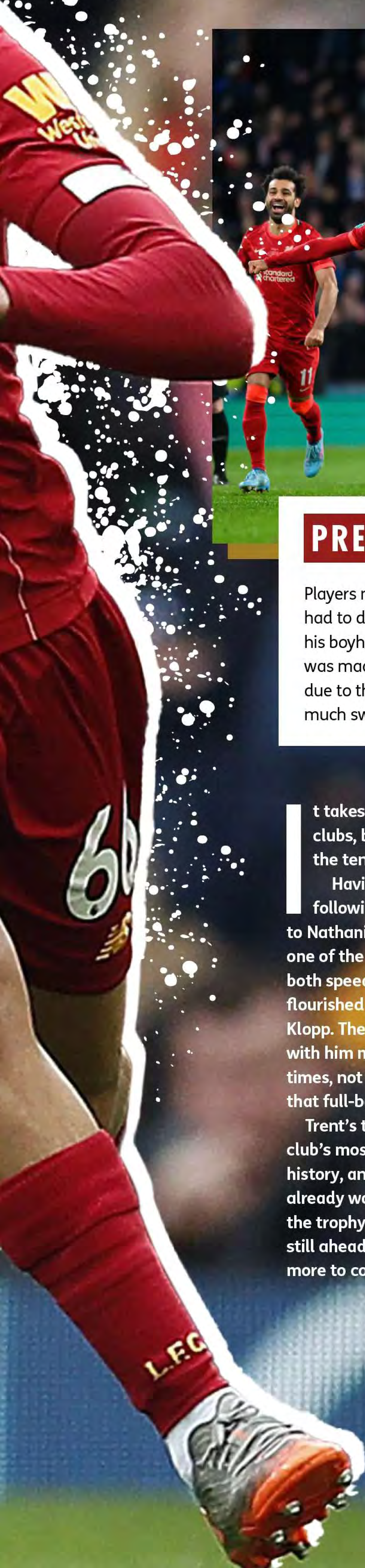
TRENT ALEXANDER-ARNOLD

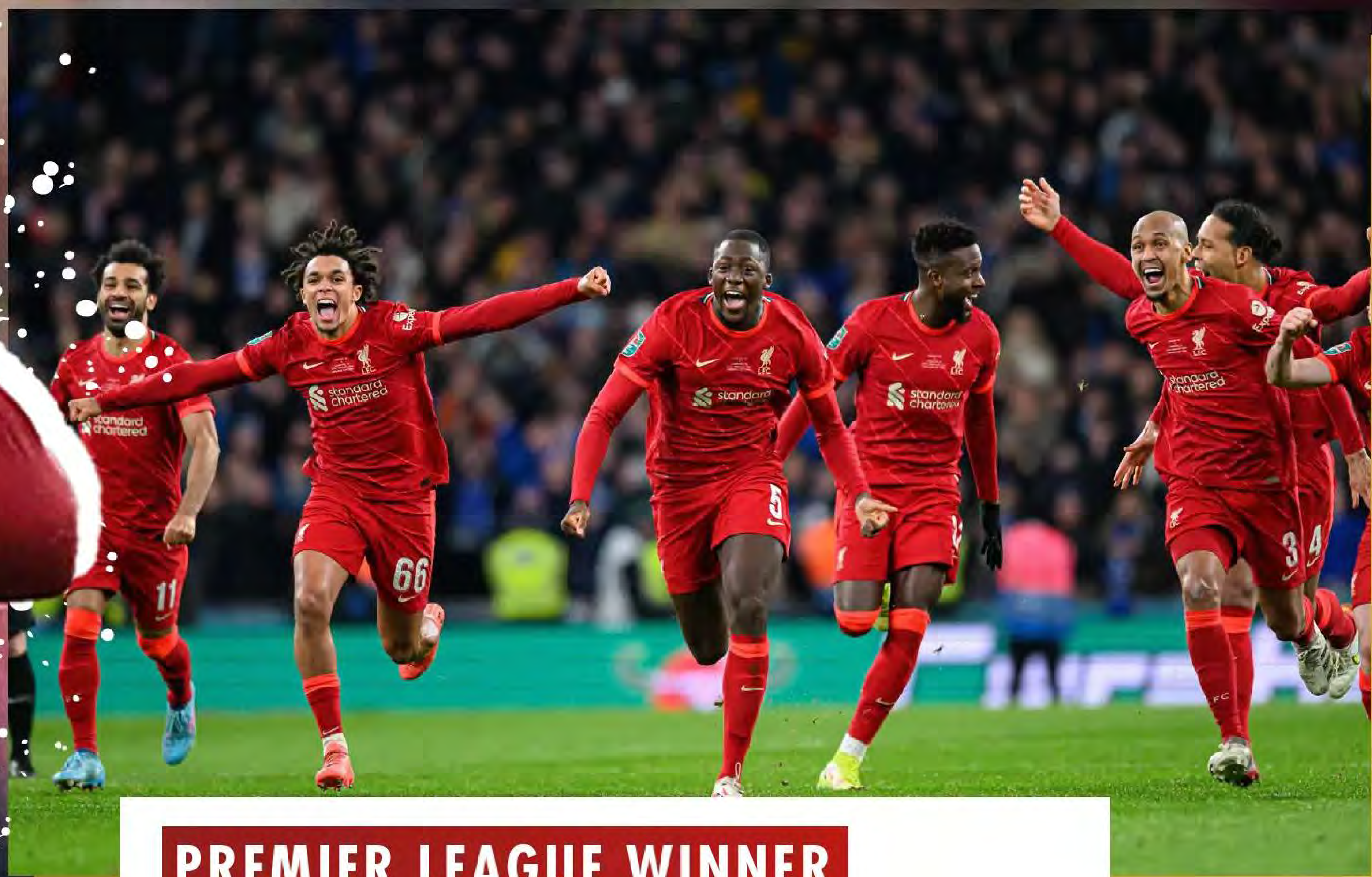
Liverpool born and bred, the rapid full-back is already a legend on the Kop

CREATIVE FORCE

CREATIVE FORCE

TRENT ALEXANDER-ARNOLD





PREMIER LEAGUE WINNER

Players move all over the place in pursuit of major honours, but all Trent had to do was remain right where he was. Bombing down the wings for his boyhood club alongside his left-back counterpart, Andy Robertson, he was made to wait for his first Premier League winners' medal in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but that only made lifting the trophy that much sweeter.

It takes a lot to break through the ranks at the top clubs, but Trent Alexander-Arnold managed this at the tender age of 18, and hasn't looked back.

Having impressed in his first season, the following year, Trent took advantage of an injury to Nathaniel Clyne, and quickly established himself as one of the best right-backs in the league. Possessing both speed and outstanding passing ability, he flourished under the tutelage of manager Jürgen Klopp. The wider footballing community has noticed, with him making the PFA Team of the Year three times, not to mention numerous individual accolades that full-backs don't tend to get.

Trent's time at Liverpool has coincided with the club's most successful period in Premier League history, and he has been a pivotal part of this. He's already won almost everything there is to win on the trophy front, but with the best years of his career still ahead of him, you can bet that there's plenty more to come.

Left Trent was spotted by Liverpool at six years old, joining the club's academy soon after

FUN FACT

Trent's uncle, John Alexander, previously played professionally for Millwall and Reading.

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 7 October 1998
BIRTHPLACE Liverpool, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 175cm (5'9")
POSITION Defender
PL TEAMS Liverpool (2016-present)
NUMBER 66

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- x1 PREMIER LEAGUE
- x1 FA CUP
- x1 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **58** NUMBER OF ASSISTS IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE
- **68** NUMBER OF PREMIER LEAGUE CLEAN SHEETS
- **13** MOST PREMIER LEAGUE ASSISTS BY A DEFENDER IN A SEASON



Images Shutterstock; **Main Image** Darren Staples / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy **Boxout Image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Left** David Klein / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy

FUN FACT

Son is the first Asian player to score 100 Premier League goals. No other Asian player has passed 20.

SON HEUNG-MIN

How Tottenham's quiet, unassuming striker became a Premier League and global superstar

When Tottenham signed Son Heung-min from Bayer Leverkusen in 2015, he wasn't particularly well-known in Premier League circles. However, it didn't take him too long to become one of the league's most talented and recognisable players. His first season was a bit slow, scoring just four goals in 28 games, but then he really started to find his feet. Since that first season he hasn't failed to make at least double figures for goals in eight seasons, with his 23 in 2021-22 earning him the Premier League Golden Boot.

That kind of consistency is like gold dust for managers and fans, leading him to become a firm favourite among his Spurs teammates, coaching staff and supporters. At the start of the 2023-24 season he was named Tottenham captain by head coach Ange Postecoglou. During the same season he became the club's fifth highest goalscorer of all time with 162 goals in all competitions. Son attracts a legion of fans from South Korea for every Tottenham game, and his goals, attitude and popularity have seen him become a Premier League icon.



CREATIVE FORCE

CREATIVE FORCE



SON HEUNG-MIN

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 8 July 1992
BIRTHPLACE Chuncheon, South Korea
NATIONALITY South Korean
HEIGHT 183cm (6′)
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Tottenham Hotspur (2015-present)
NUMBER 7

DOMESTIC HONOURS

N/A

STATS & RECORDS

46 PL GOALS WITH WEAKER FOOT

0.6 PL GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS PER GAME

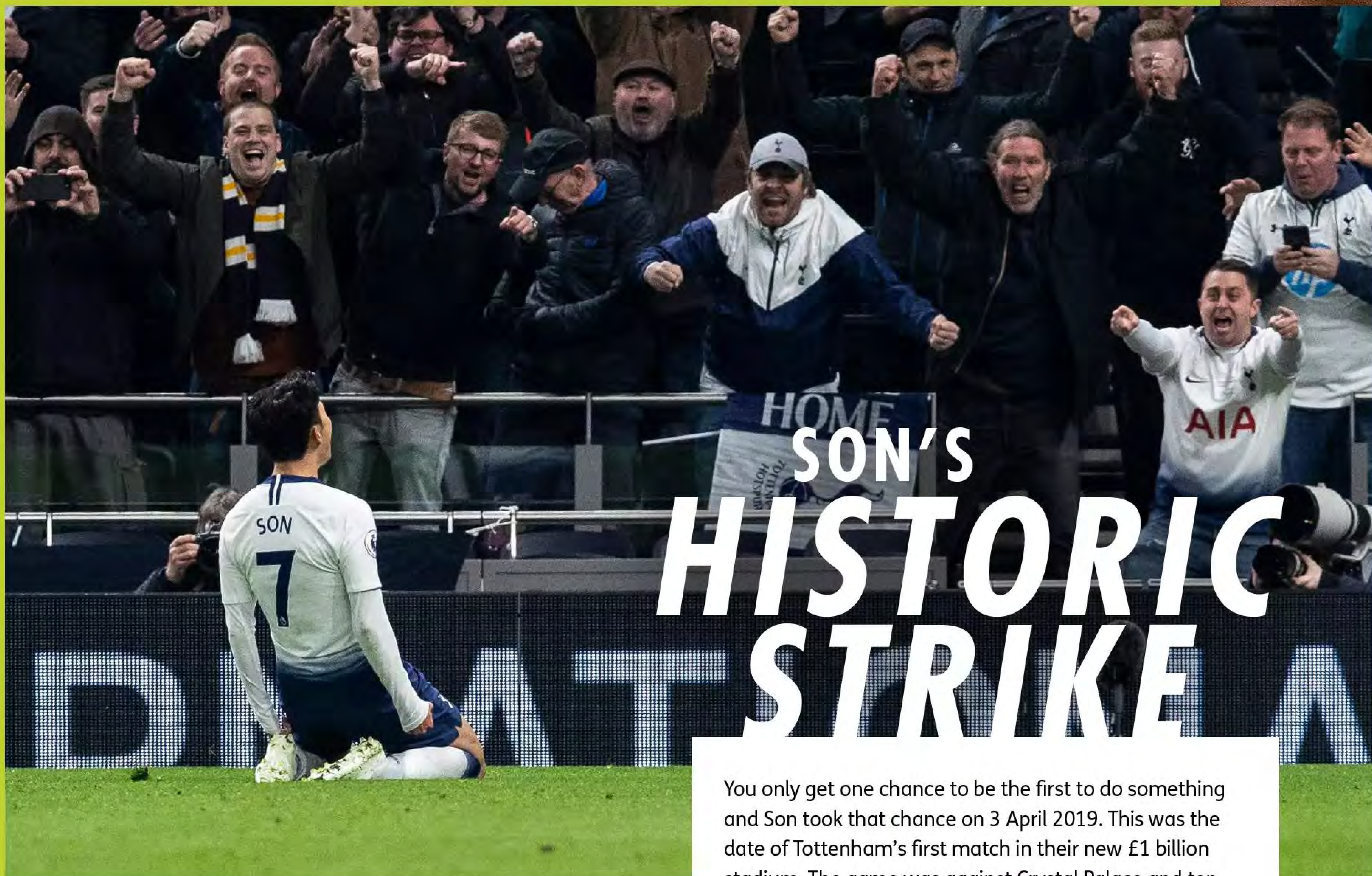
1 PREMIER LEAGUE GOLDEN BOOT AWARD



PARTNERS IN CRIME

Football is all about partnerships and Son's alliance with former Tottenham captain Harry Kane was one of the very best. Son and Kane set each other up for a combined 47 Premier League goals – more than any other duo, beating the likes of Chelsea's Frank Lampard and Didier Drogba and Manchester City's David Silva and Sergio Agüero.

Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Left** Action Plus Sports Image / Alamy



SON'S HISTORIC STRIKE

You only get one chance to be the first to do something and Son took that chance on 3 April 2019. This was the date of Tottenham's first match in their new £1 billion stadium. The game was against Crystal Palace and ten minutes into the first half Son received the ball, cut inside and lashed in a left-footed strike that earned him a goal, as well as a place in history.

"SON RECEIVED THE BALL, CUT INSIDE AND LASHED IN A LEFT-FOOTED STRIKE"

RUN SONNY RUN

Every year the Puskas Award is given to the player that has scored the best goal in world football. In 2020, Son was given the honour for his unbelievable goal against Burnley in the Premier League. Picking up the ball just outside his area, Son outpaced two Burnley players, skipped past two more challenges, burst clear of the defence and slotted home an all-time classic.







LIKE NORTH LONDON BUSES

Most players will say that when they're going through a dry spell, they'd be happy getting a goal off their backside. Son does things differently. After failing to score in his first six games of the 2022-23 Premier League season, he was dropped against Leicester. He came on after an hour, and 15 minutes later, he fired in a beauty. Eleven minutes after that he curled in a stunner, and then two minutes after that stroked home for his hat-trick. A 13-minute treble had Son back with a bang.

FUN FACT

Son completed three weeks mandatory national service in 2020 – but didn't miss any Premier League football due to the Covid-19 shutdown.

Images Shutterstock; **Image (From top left)** Han Yan / Xinhua / Alamy; Mark Pain / Alamy; Mark Pain / Alamy; Valeriano Di Domenico / Getty

RYAN GIGGS

Ryan Giggs ran down the wing in many a Premier League game, tearing the opposition apart for years

Simply by virtue of the number of Premier League titles he won – including the very first – Ryan Giggs is one of the greatest footballers to have ever graced the pitch. With a staggering 13 championships to his name and an ability to adapt as the years went by, his career spanned Manchester United's most successful spell and his incredible skill was more than enough to earn him his place in the team lineup season after season.

He had a strong reputation as a confident, fast-paced left winger who could play in central midfield, go deep, open up space and run at defenders. His Premier League goalscoring tally reached double figures in his earlier years and he certainly had an eye for the spectacular – an amazing show of trickery against Queens Park Rangers in 1994, as he beat flailing defenders before driving the ball past the goalkeeper's right, remains strong in the memory of those who saw it.



FUN FACT

Giggs was never handed a red card in all of his time playing for United.

WING WIZARD

WING WIZARD



RYAN GIGGS

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 29 November 1973
BIRTHPLACE Cardiff, Wales
NATIONALITY Welsh
HEIGHT 179cm (5'10")
POSITION Midfielder/Forward
PL TEAMS Manchester United (1990-2014)
NUMBER 11

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x13 PREMIER LEAGUE
x4 FA CUP
x4 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

13 MOST PREMIER LEAGUE TITLES WON BY A FOOTBALLER
162 MOST ASSISTS IN PREMIER LEAGUE HISTORY
0.26 ASSISTS PER PL GAME

Above Giggs scored 109 Premier League goals in total, chalking up 407 wins and just 87 losses

Left Giggs scored in 21 of the 22 Premier League seasons in which he played

THE NEW GEORGE BEST

Giggs was often compared to Manchester United winger George Best – both could beat a player and both had sublime skills. But there were other similarities between the pair, particularly when it came to their off-field activities. Best was dubbed the 'Fifth Beatle' in the 1960s due to his glamorous lifestyle and Giggs was also a pin-up favourite. The BBC once dubbed him the Premiership's poster boy.





Images Shutterstock; **Main image** dpa picture alliance / Alamy **Boxout image** Shaun Botterill / Getty **Left** Shaun Botterill / Getty; **Top** Clive Brunskill / Staff



FUN FACT

Lampard is one of only three players with both 100+ PL goals and assists.

MIDFIELD MAESTRO

FRANK LAMPARD

Over a long and massively successful career, 'Super Frank' became the most prolific midfielder in Premier League history

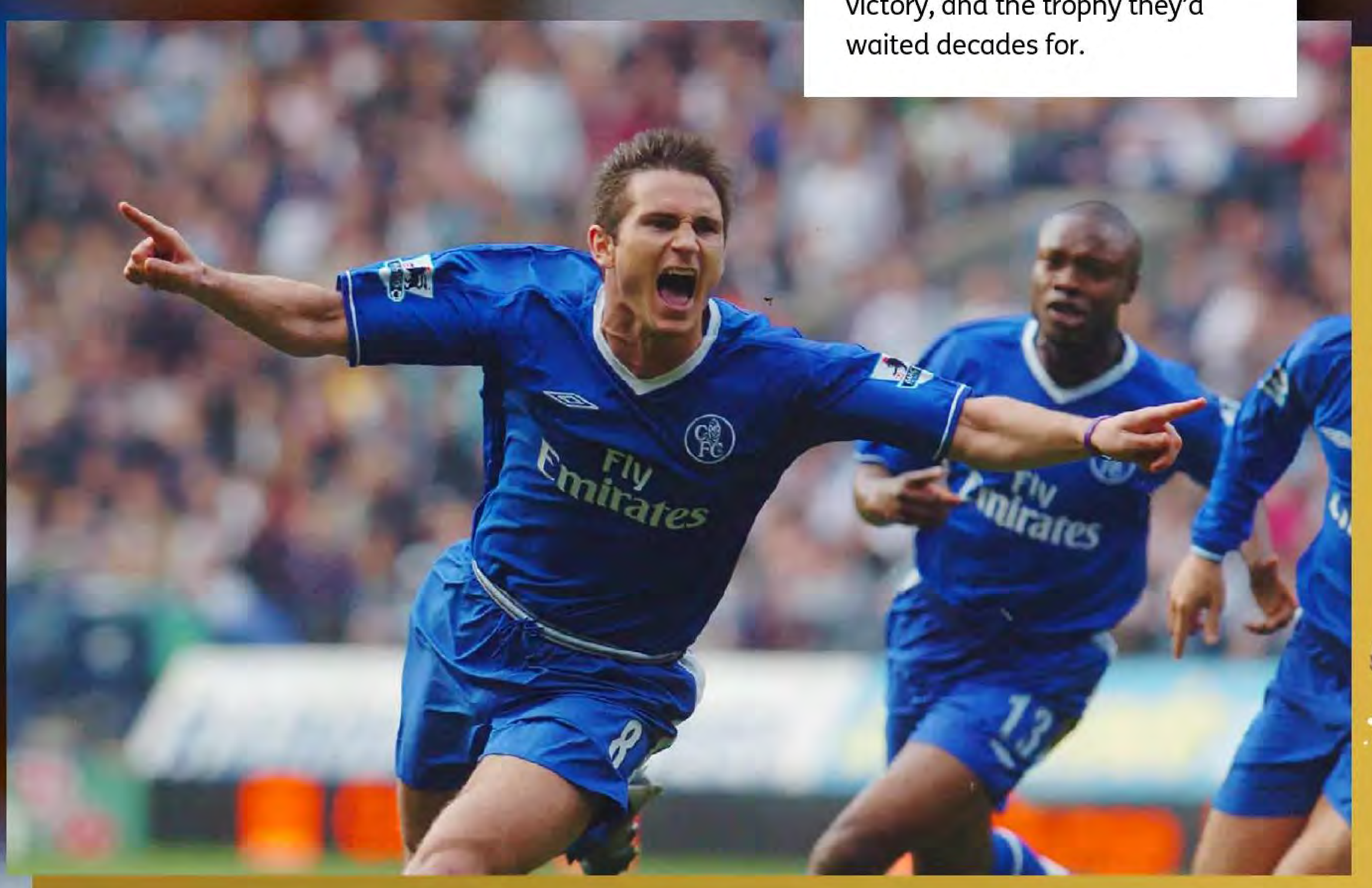
MIDFIELD MAESTRO

When Frank Lampard arrived at Chelsea in 2001, they hadn't won a league title in almost 50 years. When he left, almost 13 years later, they had won three more, as well as every other major trophy.

A prodigy who broke through at West Ham, Lampard initially struggled to escape the shadow of his father, Frank Sr, a Hammers legend and coach at the club. After a big-money move, it was at Stamford Bridge where Lampard began to flourish, particularly upon the arrival of José Mourinho.

A potent attacking threat with a thumping shot and impeccable timing, the quintessential Lampard goals were either a rifling strike from outside the penalty area, or an emphatic finish from a cross after a late run into the box. All in all, he hit 177 Premier League goals for West Ham, Chelsea and in a final season at Manchester City. No other midfielder even comes close.

"A POTENT ATTACKING THREAT WITH A THUMPING SHOT AND IMPECCABLE TIMING"



Left Chelsea fans voted Lampard the club's greatest ever player in an online poll in 2021

LAMPARD AT THE DOUBLE

With a first Premier League title on the line in a must-win game against Bolton Wanderers in 2005, Chelsea needed a hero. Step forward Lampard. Two clinical strikes – one after a bustling solo dribble into the box and the other a tidy finish after rounding the goalkeeper – gave Chelsea the victory, and the trophy they'd waited decades for.

FRANK LAMPARD

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 20 June 1978
BIRTHPLACE London, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 184cm (6'0")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS West Ham United (1995-2001), Chelsea (2001-14), Manchester City (2014-15)
NUMBER 8

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- x3 PREMIER LEAGUE
- x4 FA CUP
- x2 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- 177 MOST PL GOALS BY A MIDFIELDER
- 41 MOST PL GOALS OUTSIDE THE BOX
- 39 MOST PL TEAMS SCORED AGAINST



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Matt Dunham / Associated Press / Alamy **Boxout image** Paul Barker / AFP via Getty **Left** Stu Forster / Allsport / Getty

BEST OF THE REST: GOALKEEPERS

Dive into the PL's top keepers whose safe hands carried their teams to major honours

Goalkeepers are the unsung heroes who stand as a last line of defence. Their role is a critical one, requiring a unique blend of agility, reflexes and mental fortitude. From acrobatic saves to a commanding presence on the field, these players have redefined the position for the 21st century. Join us as we explore the best shot-stoppers and sweeper-keepers of the Premier League era.



PETR ČECH

Čech became the most expensive goalkeeper in the world when he joined Chelsea for £7 million in 2004. Over the next nine seasons, he contributed to four Premier League titles, four FA Cups and one Champions League. Thanks to another four years spent across London with Arsenal, Čech amassed more Premier League clean sheets than any other keeper – 202 in total. He's perhaps best known for his headguard after suffering a life-threatening skull fracture in 2006.

IMAGE - © Avalon / Alamy



EDWIN VAN DER SAR

Four-time Premier League winner, Van der Sar was a key component of Manchester United's steely defence. He saved a penalty against Manchester City that helped his team to the title in 2007, and he stopped a penalty in the shootout against Chelsea to win the 2008 Champions League. In 2009, Van der Sar set a new record for the longest duration without conceding a goal: 1,311 minutes, or more than 14 games.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy

PETER SCHMEICHEL

Danish keeper Schmeichel cost just £505,000 when he joined Manchester United in 1991, and he became the lynchpin of Alex Ferguson's first Premier League-winning sides. Schmeichel's colossal frame made him a great shot-stopper, and he started many counterattacks with long, accurate throws. He won five Premier League titles in total, and his final match for United was the Champions League final that ended with his team securing a historic treble.

IMAGE - © Allsport UK / Allsport / Getty



PEPE REINA

Liverpool's first-choice goalkeeper for eight seasons, Reina raised eyebrows when he supplanted Champions League hero Jerzy Dudek from between the posts after his arrival from Villarreal. But Reina was a more reliable presence in goal and was comfortable with the ball at his feet. Between 2006 and 2008, Reina won a hat-trick of Golden Glove awards for most clean sheets in a season.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy





JOE HART

Hart broke into the Manchester City first team in 2007, but it wasn't until 2010 that he made the spot his own. He won the Golden Glove award four times over the next five seasons, tying with Čech for the most wins, but he fell out of favour after Pep Guardiola took over at City. Hart went on to make further Premier League appearances for West Ham (on loan) and Burnley after leaving Manchester.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy



DAVID DE GEA

An 12-year veteran at Manchester United, de Gea struggled during his first couple of seasons but flourished after he adjusted to the English game. He was best known as a shot-stopper, often using his feet to block the ball, a technique he picked up while playing futsal as a child. De Gea won just one Premier League title but was a reliable presence trusted by Alex Ferguson's successors at Old Trafford.

IMAGE - © Sander Chamid / SCS / AFLO / Alamy



SHAY GIVEN

Given established himself as one of the Premier League's top keepers while playing for Newcastle United and helping the Magpies to challenge for the title. Although he wasn't the biggest of goalkeepers, Given's agility and athleticism made him an excellent shot-stopper. After leaving Newcastle in 2009, Given guarded the net for Manchester City, Aston Villa and Stoke City, ending his career with 450 Premier League appearances and 113 clean sheets.

IMAGE - © Ben Radford / Allsport / Getty

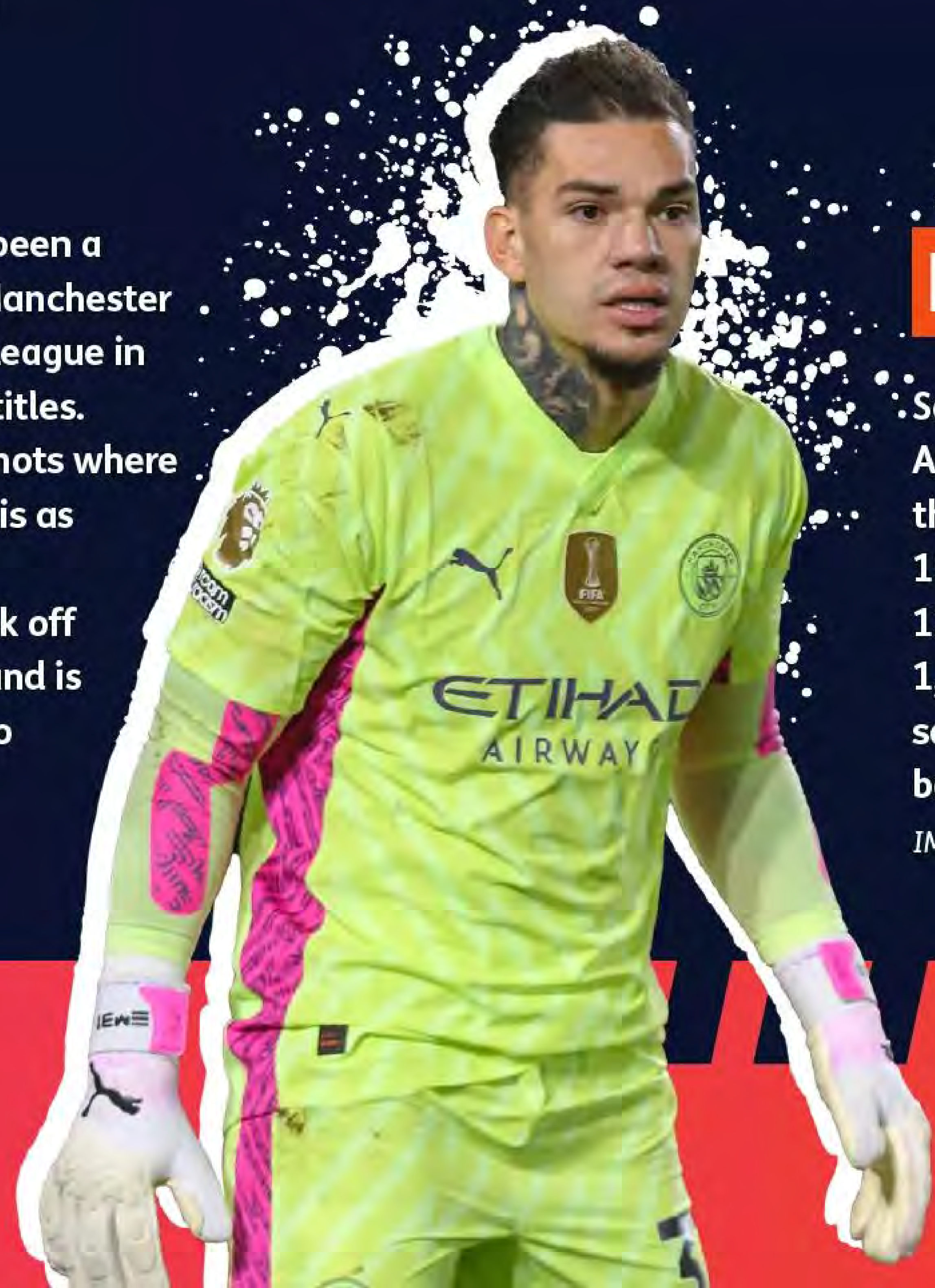


JENS LEHMANN

An efficient keeper who used his positioning skills and physical presence to guard his goal without the need for spectacular saves, Lehmann only conceded 26 goals as Arsenal's Invincibles won the Premier League in 2004. Lehmann left Arsenal in 2008 having kept 80 clean sheets in 199 games, but reached a double-century of appearances after coming out of retirement and providing emergency injury cover in 2011.

IMAGE - © Mark Leech / Offside via Getty

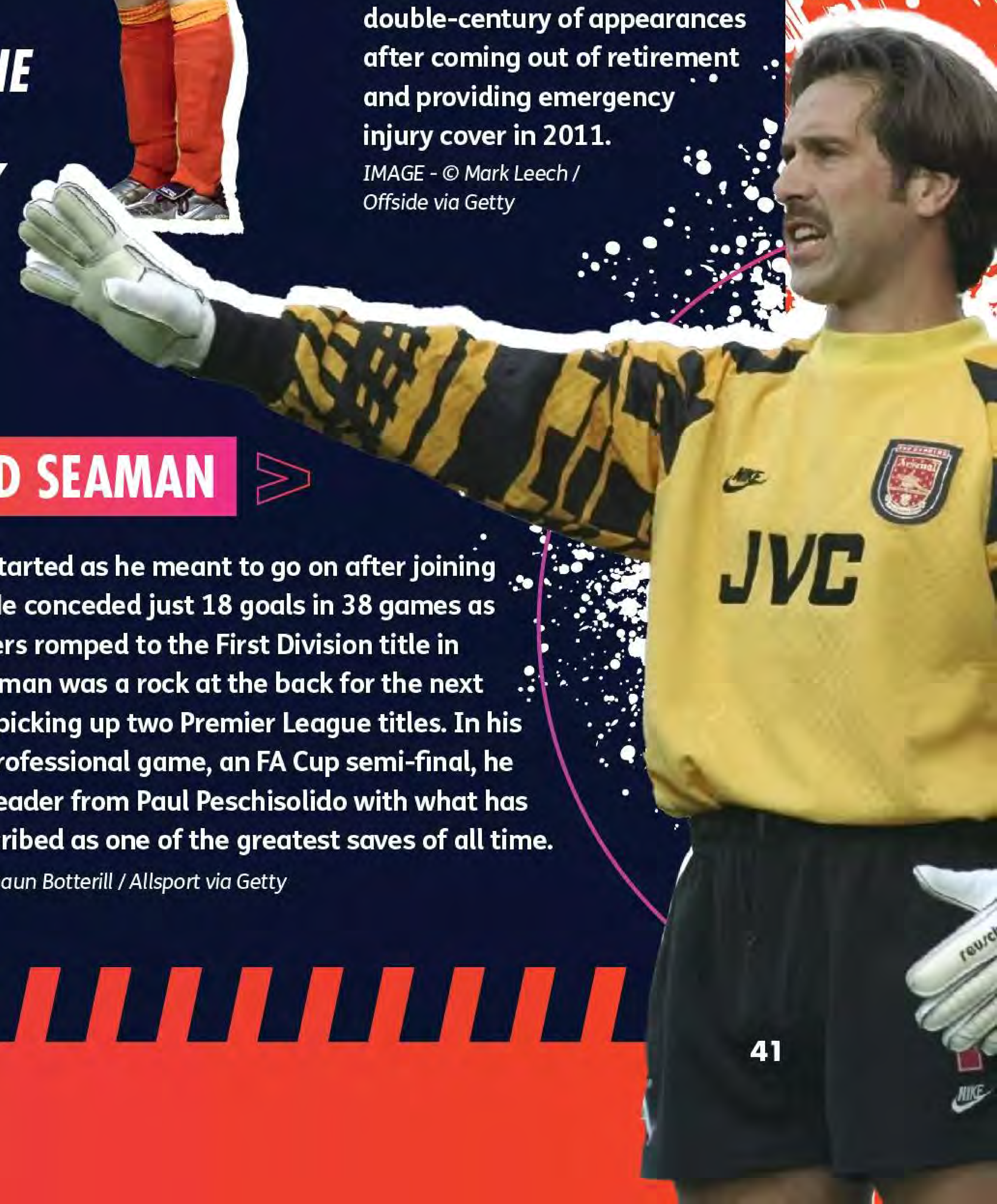
"SEAMAN WAS A ROCK AT THE BACK FOR OVER 12 YEARS, PICKING UP TWO PL TITLES"



EDERSON

Brazilian keeper Ederson has been a mainstay in Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, winning the Champions League in 2023 and six Premier League titles. Although Ederson can block shots where required, his biggest strength is as distributor and launcher of counterattacks. He's also quick off his line as a sweeper-keeper and is comfortable using both feet to play out from the back.

IMAGE - © Mark Pain / Alamy



DAVID SEAMAN

Seaman started as he meant to go on after joining Arsenal. He conceded just 18 goals in 38 games as the Gunners romped to the First Division title in 1991. Seaman was a rock at the back for the next 12 years, picking up two Premier League titles. In his 1,000th professional game, an FA Cup semi-final, he saved a header from Paul Peschisolido with what has been described as one of the greatest saves of all time.

IMAGE - © Shaun Botterill / Allsport via Getty

Images Getty, Alamy, Shutterstock



FUN FACT

Foden wears the number 47 to honour his grandfather Walter, who passed away at that age.

PHIL FODEN

The jewel in Manchester City's crown has grown into his role at the heart of a winning machine

It's a point of pride for Manchester City fans that for all the billions spent, the superstars signed and the glitzy managerial appointments that have followed the club's transformative takeover in 2008, the team's most important player might just be a lad from down the road in Stockport.

There is no doubt that Phil Foden is City through and through. A boyhood fan who just so happens to be living out his dream as part of one of the most successful teams in history. A silky, left-footed midfielder with a magical first touch, he is adept at playing across the front line, operating centrally or out wide, and is able to beat his man with ease.

An increasingly important member of Pep Guardiola's team, he's also added a ruthless finishing streak to his already sublime creative play. In the title-winning 2023-24 season, only Erling Haaland scored more goals for the Citizens.

CREATIVE FORCE



PHIL FODEN

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	28 May 2000
BIRTHPLACE	Stockport, England
NATIONALITY	English
HEIGHT	171cm (5'7")
POSITION	Midfielder/Forward
PL TEAMS	Manchester City (2017-present)
NUMBER	47

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x6	PREMIER LEAGUE
x2	FA CUP
x4	LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

17	YEARS OLD – YOUNGEST PREMIER LEAGUE WINNER
4	YEARS OLD – THE AGE FODEN JOINED MAN CITY
0.77	PL GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS PER GAME IN 2023-24

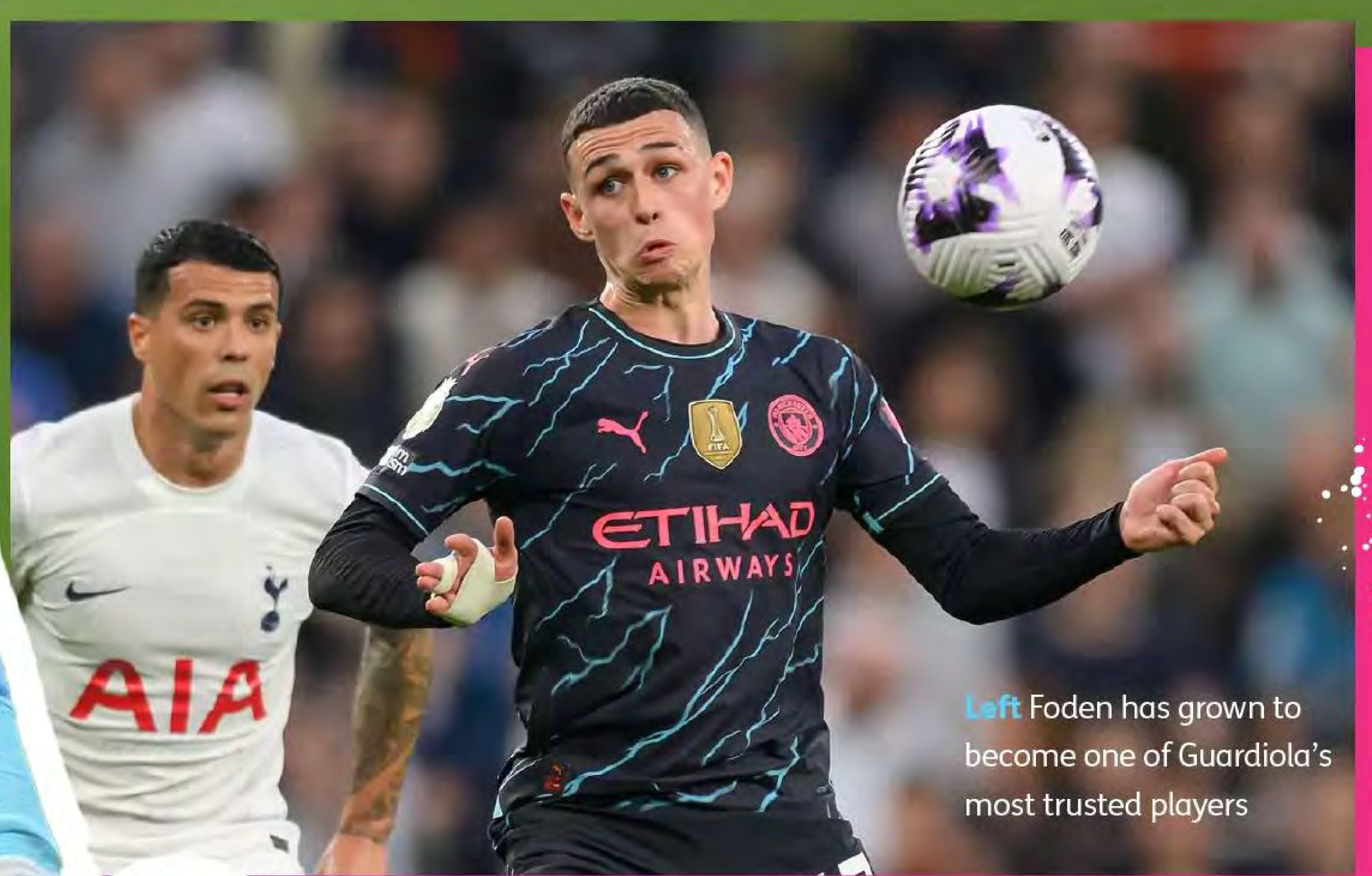




PEP'S CHOSEN ONE

Guardiola has been key to Foden's development, first selecting the youngster at the age of 16. After giving him his first Premier League start in 2019, the Manchester City manager said Foden would be an important player "for the next decade". More than five years on, it's easy to see why he was so complimentary.

"FODEN IS CITY THROUGH AND THROUGH. A BOYHOOD FAN WHO JUST SO HAPPENS TO BE LIVING OUT HIS DREAM"



Left Foden has grown to become one of Guardiola's most trusted players

Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** MatchDay Images Limited / Alamy **Left** Mark Pain / Alamy **Insert** Mark Pain / Alamy

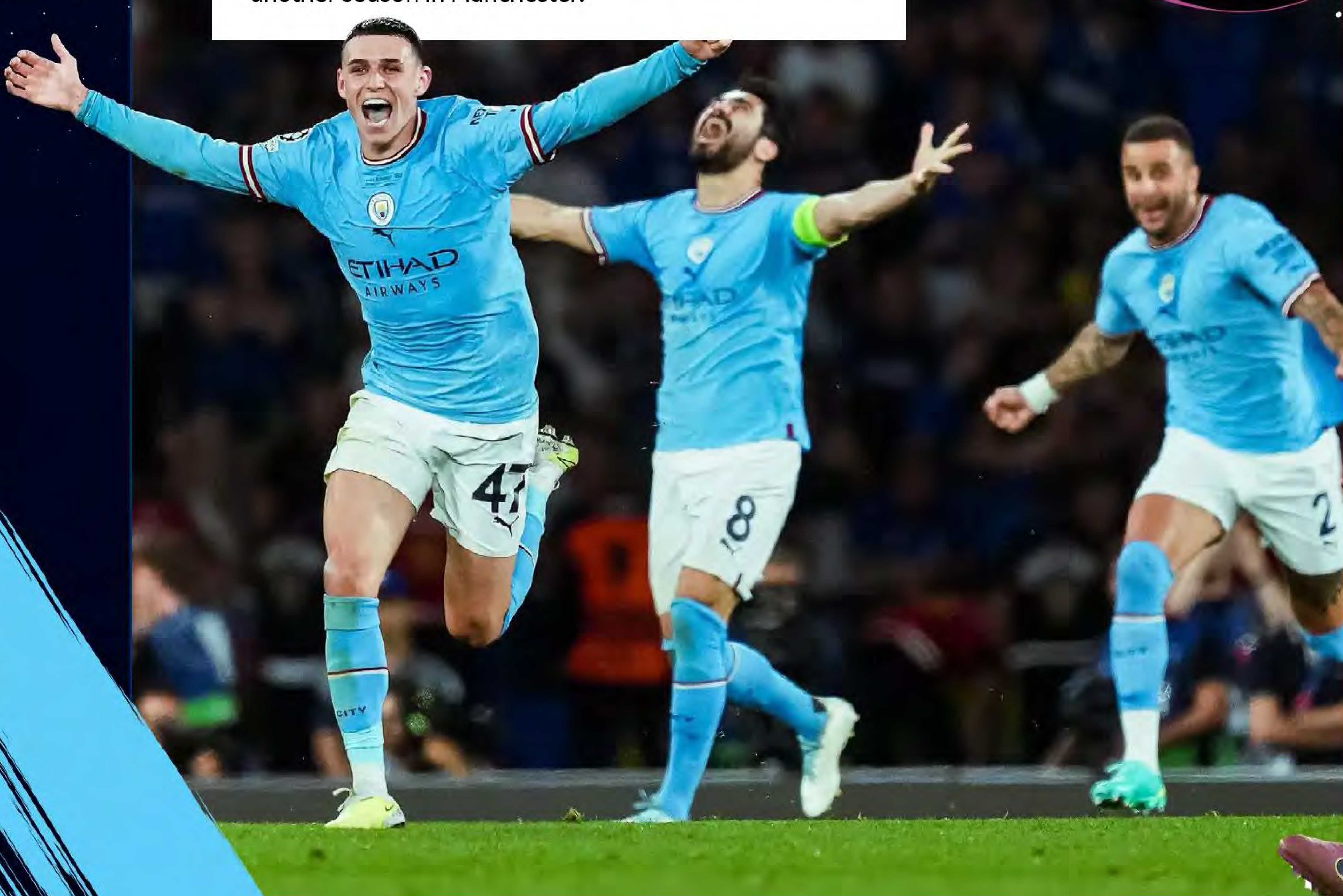
THE NEW *SILVA*



If City fans squinted in the 2019-20 season, they could have been forgiven for thinking there were two David Silvas on the pitch. Foden has described the Spaniard as his idol, and the similarities are striking. Both are elegant, left-footed playmakers able to conjure magic in the tightest of spaces on the pitch. After Silva's departure, Foden may yet surpass his hero.

MANCHESTER IS BLUE

Foden couldn't have picked a better occasion for his first career hat-trick if he'd tried. With Manchester United the visitors to the Etihad Stadium in October 2022, City set about demolishing their local rivals. Foden and teammate Erling Haaland both netted three times en route to an emphatic 6-3 win, and bragging rights for yet another season in Manchester.



FUN FACT

Foden is the first player to win the Premier League Young Player of the Season award twice.





FUN FACT

Teammate Kyle Walker said that Foden's shooting has earned him the nickname 'The Sniper'.

SIX OF THE BEST

Foden won his sixth Premier League title in 2024, just days before his 24th birthday, scooping the league's Player of the Season award in the process after a phenomenal year. These are truly astonishing feats for a player who's only just entering his peak, and if anyone is going to match – or even beat – Ryan Giggs' as-yet-unassailable record of 13 Premier League titles, it's likely to be another one-club man from Manchester.

Images Shutterstock; **Images (From top left)** TF-Images / Getty; Mark Pain / Alamy; Mark Pain / Alamy; Giuseppe Maffia / Alamy

MARTIN ØDEGAARD

The lost wonderkid of Real Madrid found a home in England – to become Mikel Arteta's maestro in midfield

When he was just 15 years old, Martin Ødegaard met with Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger for a steak dinner to discuss the possibility of moving to North London. Now, he captains that very team.

Ødegaard had to move to the Emirates Stadium the long way around, signing for Real Madrid as a teenager, going on successive loan moves away from the Spanish capital and eventually settling in England when the hype had fully died down. He would go on to take manager Mikel Arteta's No.8 shirt and run the Arsenal midfield: his manager knew, after all, what it was like to be cast from a Spanish giant without being given a big chance of playing in the first team.

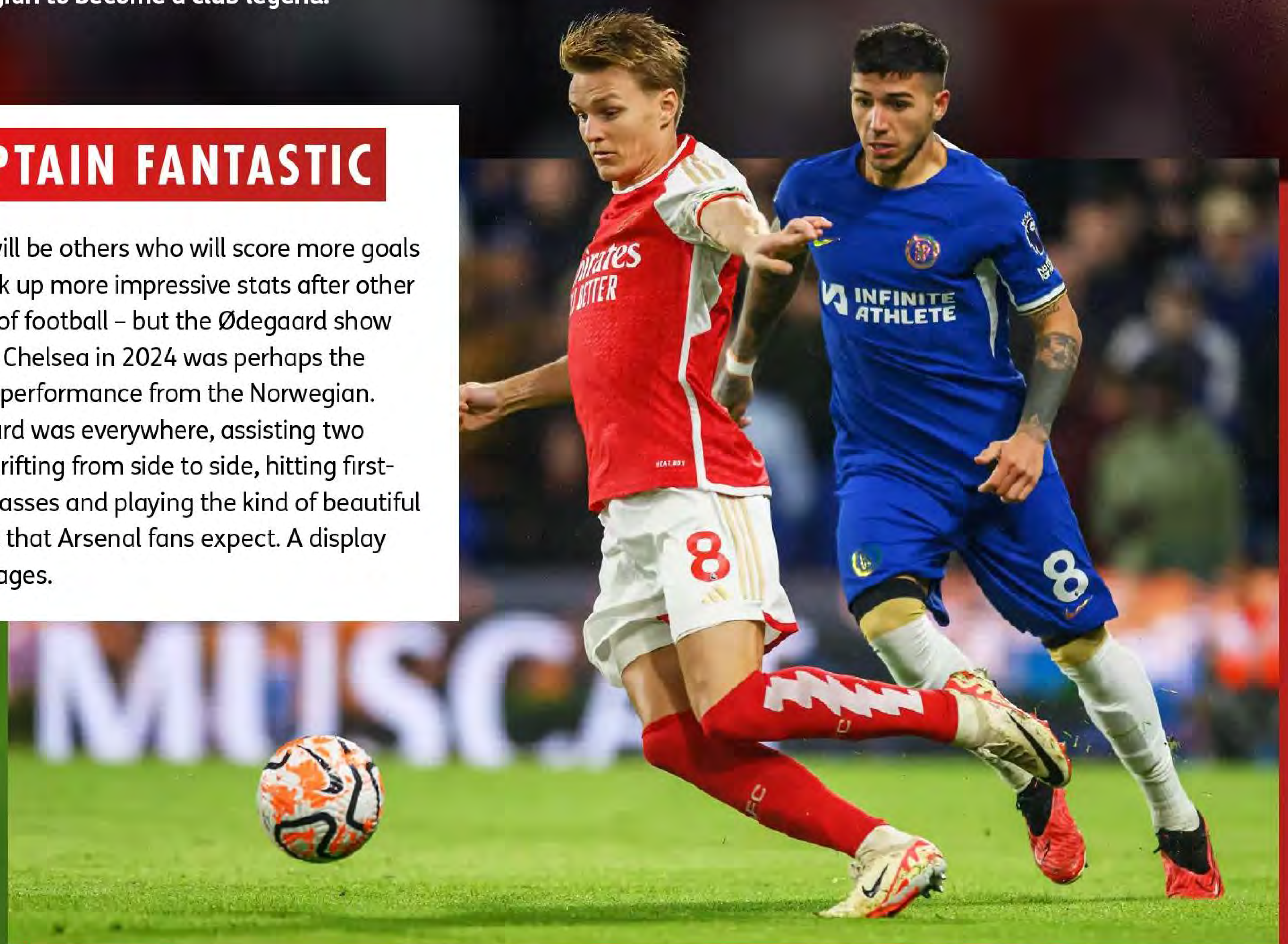
Real's loss was Arsenal's gain. Ødegaard has inspired Arsenal to title challenges and played with the elegance and vision of Gunners royalty. Still so young, too, there's time for this Norwegian to become a club legend.

FUN FACT

The *Football Manager* game had to ask Ødegaard's dad for permission to use him, given he was so young.


CAPTAIN FANTASTIC

There will be others who will score more goals and rack up more impressive stats after other games of football – but the Ødegaard show against Chelsea in 2024 was perhaps the perfect performance from the Norwegian. Ødegaard was everywhere, assisting two goals, drifting from side to side, hitting first-touch passes and playing the kind of beautiful football that Arsenal fans expect. A display for the ages.



Right Ødegaard was named Arsenal captain ahead of the 2022-23 season and has led by example ever since

MIDFIELD MAESTRO



MARTIN ØDEGAARD

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 17 December 1998
BIRTHPLACE Drammen, Norway
NATIONALITY Norwegian
HEIGHT 178cm (5'10")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS Arsenal (2021-present)
NUMBER 8

DOMESTIC HONOURS

N/A

STATS & RECORDS

15 GOALS IN THE 2022-23 SEASON FROM MIDFIELD

15 YEARS OLD – AGE HE MADE HIS SENIOR DEBUT FOR NORWAY

84% PASS COMPLETION IN PREMIER LEAGUE SEASON 2023-24



"REAL'S LOSS WAS ARSENAL'S GAIN. ØDEGAARD HAS INSPIRED ARSENAL TO TITLE CHALLENGES AND PLAYED WITH THE ELEGANCE AND VISION OF GUNNERS ROYALTY"

Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Left** Paul Marriott / Alamy



FUN FACT

Drogba was the first African player to score 100 Premier League goals.

DIDIER DROGBA

The ultimate big game player, Drogba scored goals, won titles and always delivered for Chelsea on the big stage

When José Mourinho demanded that Chelsea sign Didier Drogba upon his arrival in 2004, owner Roman Abramovich allegedly answered: "Who?". Fortunately for Chelsea fans, Mourinho got his man. Drogba arrived from Marseille for a club record £24 million – a major fee for a player with just two seasons of top-flight football to his name.

Drogba began paying back that investment immediately. In his first two seasons he helped fire Chelsea to back-to-back Premier League titles – their first for 50 years. A bulldozing centre forward with superb technique and a lethal strike, Drogba terrorised defences and provided the focal point for Chelsea's dynamic attack. He scored goals of all kinds – powerful headers, thumping volleys, curling free kicks – but was also adept at bringing others into play, whether slipping in one of Chelsea's flying wingers, or laying it off for an advancing Frank Lampard. The complete Premier League striker.

Right Though Chelsea fell just short in 2006-07, Drogba was unstoppable, leading the league with 20 goals

GOAL HERO

DIDIER DROGBA



THE LAST DANCE

When Drogba re-signed for Chelsea in 2014, aged 36 and after two years playing in China and Turkey, fans were a little underwhelmed. Drogba was a legend of course, and a great mentor to have in the dressing room, but could he still contribute on the pitch? The answer was yes. The veteran chipped in with crucial goals as Chelsea secured their – and Drogba's – fourth Premier League title.

Below Over his two stints at Chelsea, Drogba made 254 Premier League appearances, scoring 104 goals

"A BULLDOZING CENTRE FORWARD WITH SUPERB TECHNIQUE AND A LETHAL STRIKE, DROGBA TERRORISED DEFENCES"



BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 11 March 1978
BIRTHPLACE Abidjan, Ivory Coast
NATIONALITY Ivorian
HEIGHT 188cm (6'2")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Chelsea (2004-12, 2014-15)
NUMBER 11

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- x4 PREMIER LEAGUE
- x4 FA CUP
- x3 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **39** PL GOALS AND ASSISTS IN 2009-10
- **9** MOST CUP FINAL GOALS FOR CHELSEA
- **2** PREMIER LEAGUE GOLDEN BOOT AWARDS





STEVEN GERRARD

A Scouse Superman, Gerrard was the beating heart of Liverpool for almost two decades

Liverpool are a club blessed with many idols, past and present, but arguably none are as beloved as Steven Gerrard. A Liverpool lad from the beginning, Gerrard broke through as a gangly teenager in the late 90s but would develop into one of the world's greatest players.

A talismanic, box-to-box midfielder with a cannon of a shot, a penchant for a Hollywood pass and a love for crunching tackles, Gerrard really did do everything you could ask for from a midfielder – and he often needed to when his sides were struggling. Liverpool came close – agonisingly so – on a couple of occasions, but ultimately Gerrard never got his hands on a coveted Premier League winners' medal.

He may have the unenviable title of the greatest player to never win the Premier League, but season after season of heroic performances mean that his status as a bona fide legend is definitely assured.

MIDFIELD MAESTRO

MIDFIELD MAESTRO



"GERRARD BROKE THROUGH AS A GANGLY TEENAGER IN THE LATE 90s BUT WOULD DEVELOP INTO ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST PLAYERS"

FUN FACT

The 2006 FA Cup final has been nicknamed 'The Gerrard Final' after his performance in Liverpool's win.



Right Gerrard challenging his Chelsea rival – and England teammate – Frank Lampard. The two players were often compared

STEVEN GERRARD

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 30 May 1980
BIRTHPLACE Whiston, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 183cm (6'0")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS Liverpool (1998-2015)
NUMBER 8

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x2 FA CUP
x3 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

8 MOST PFA TEAM OF THE YEAR APPEARANCES IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE ERA

504 PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES

120 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Simon Bellis / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy **Insert** Adrian Dennis / AFP via Getty **Left** Jon Super / Associated Press / Alamy

EARNING THE ARMBAND



Even in his early days, Gerrard's leadership qualities were pronounced. He was made vice-captain by manager Gérard Houllier in 2002 and inherited the captaincy the following season at the age of just 23. As captain, Gerrard led by example for more than a decade – no Liverpool player has worn the armband on more occasions.



THE DREADED SLIP

It was a cruel twist of fate that with Liverpool charging towards a first Premier League title in 2014, it was an error from Gerrard that ultimately cost them. The captain lost his footing in a must-win game against Chelsea, allowing Demba Ba to run through and score. It was a heartbreaking way for Liverpool's title challenge to end, but Gerrard was also one of the main reasons they'd made it that close.







MERSEYSIDE DERBY MENACE

Gerrard enjoyed playing against Merseyside rivals Everton more than most. In 30 Premier League games against the Toffees, he won 16 and lost just four, scoring nine goals in the process – more than any other player in the fixture in the Premier League era. Even a couple of derby-day red cards couldn't dampen his enthusiasm.

FUN FACT


Gerrard scored 32 Premier League penalties, more than any other Liverpool player.



DECISION TO STAY

In both 2004 and 2005, Gerrard came close to a move to José Mourinho's free-spending Chelsea. With an eye-watering contract on the table and a chance to join the Premier League champions, few could have begrudged him the move. Ultimately, though, Gerrard stuck with the Reds, choosing to stay and build a legacy at his boyhood club.

Images Shutterstock; **Image (from top left)** Andrew Yates / AFP via Getty; Alamy; Sportimage Ltd / Alamy; Shaun Botterill / Getty; Allstar Picture Library Ltd; Shaun Botterill / Getty



ERIC CANTONA

Ooh ahh, ooh ahh, it's one of Manchester United's earliest Premier League stars

GAME CHANGER

GAME CHANGER

Nicknamed 'The King', Eric Cantona arrived from Leeds United for £1.2 million and promptly went on to ease Manchester United to the inaugural Premier League title. With his upturned collar, French swagger and much-needed goals, he proved to be transformative – the missing piece in the jigsaw.

As such, he was swiftly taken to the hearts of the Old Trafford faithful, displaying a high level of confidence, talent and drive. Insightful passes lifted his teammates and his sheer presence and determination to win pushed knife-edge games over the line. He made the No. 7 shirt – previously worn by United legends George Best and Bryan Robson – his own and he was a tremendous role model for the Class of '92 – the club's talented group of youngsters who were coming through at the time.

Cantona won four out of five Premier League titles and bagged the FA Cup in two of those seasons (one with a blistering late goal against Liverpool). The fact his name is still chanted at Old Trafford is no surprise.

Left Cantona arrived at Old Trafford as a replacement for Dion Dublin who broke his leg earlier in the 1992-93 season

Below While with United, Cantona enjoyed four Premier League titles



BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 24 May 1966
BIRTHPLACE Marseille, France
NATIONALITY French
HEIGHT 187cm (6'2")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Leeds United (1991-92), Manchester United (1992-97)
NUMBER 7

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x4 PREMIER LEAGUE

x2 FA CUP

FUN FACT

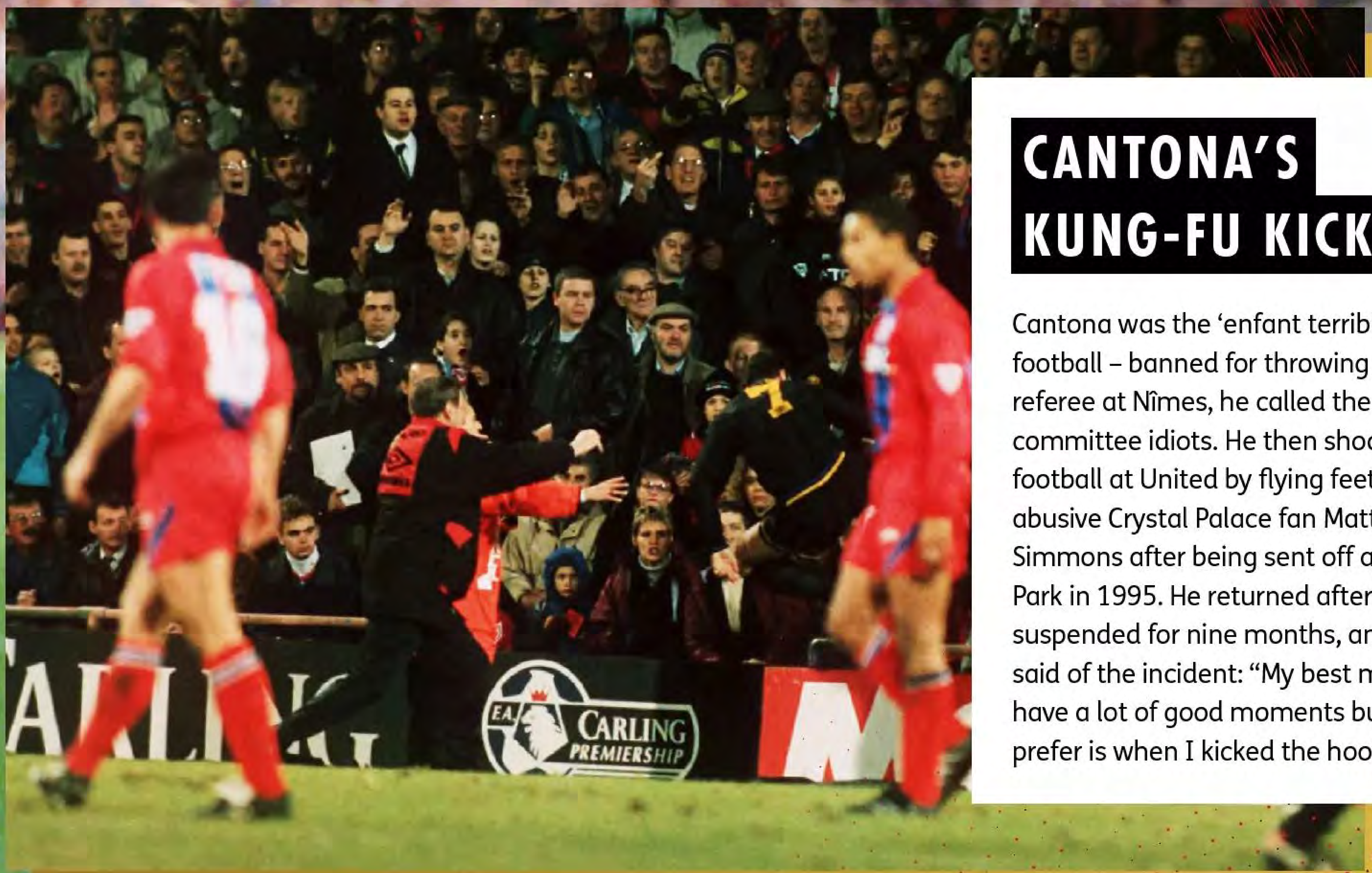
Cantona retired from football when he was only 30 years of age.

% STATS & RECORDS

0.45 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS PER GAME

56 ASSISTS IN 156 PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES

87.5% PL PENALTY CONVERSION RATE



CANTONA'S KUNG-FU KICK

Cantona was the 'enfant terrible' of French football – banned for throwing a ball at a referee at Nîmes, he called the disciplinary committee idiots. He then shocked football at United by flying feet-first into abusive Crystal Palace fan Matthew Simmons after being sent off at Selhurst Park in 1995. He returned after being suspended for nine months, and has since said of the incident: "My best moment? I have a lot of good moments but the one I prefer is when I kicked the hooligan."



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Leech / Offside / Getty; **Boxout image** PA Images / Alamy; **Left** David Davies / Offside / Getty; **Insert image** Shaun Botterill / Allsport / Getty



FUN FACT

Kompany became the first Man City player to be named Premier League Player of the Season in 2011-12.

VINCENT KOMPANY

A captain, a leader and a legend at City, the Belgian was a titan in the blue half of Manchester

DEFENSIVE ROCK

VINCENT KOMPANY



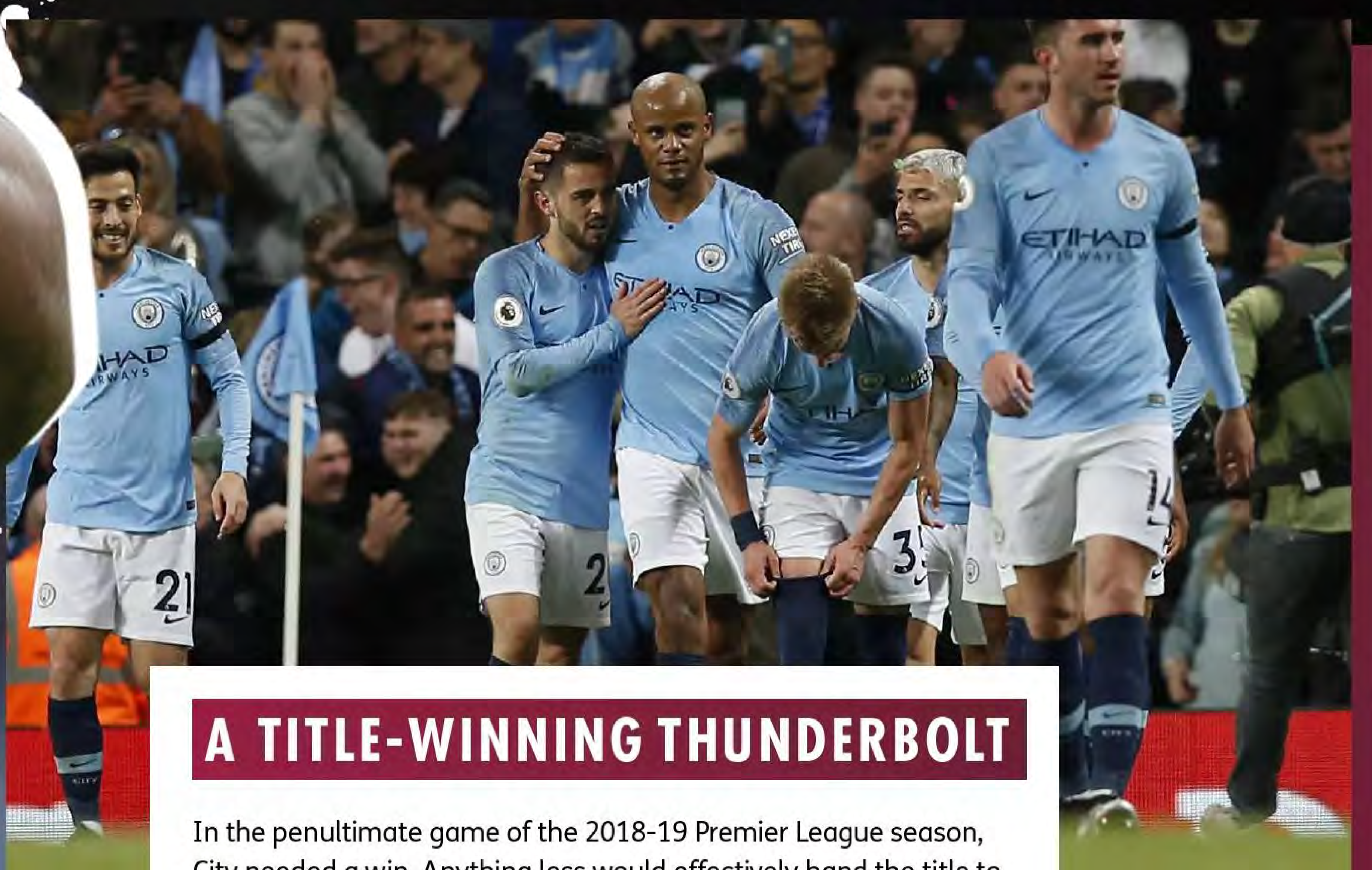
Not much fuss was made when Vincent Kompany arrived at Manchester City in August 2008, after being signed from Hamburg for a modest £6 million. And any noise was drowned out just a week later, when Sheikh Mansour completed the historic takeover of the club and Robinho arrived from Real Madrid on deadline day.

Kompany could have easily been lost in the shuffle – one of the final signings of the pre-superpower era at City – but he quickly established himself in the side and only grew in stature as the team added more and more talented players around him.

A dominant centre-half who was also technically gifted on the ball, Kompany was named captain for the 2011-12 season, and went on to lead his side to their first Premier League title. Everyone remembers the Agüero goal, but Kompany's winner in the Manchester derby two weeks earlier was just as important, as City beat their rivals to the championship on goal difference.



"HE QUICKLY ESTABLISHED HIMSELF IN THE SIDE AND ONLY GREW IN STATURE AS THE TEAM ADDED MORE AND MORE TALENTED PLAYERS AROUND HIM"



A TITLE-WINNING THUNDERBOLT

In the penultimate game of the 2018-19 Premier League season, City needed a win. Anything less would effectively hand the title to rivals Liverpool, but they were struggling to break the deadlock against a stubborn Leicester City. Step forward Kompany. City's captain – in his final season at the club – unleashed a rocket that flew into the top-right corner. It was a moment of brilliance out of nowhere, and a fairy-tale ending for the skipper.

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 10 April 1986
BIRTHPLACE Brussels, Belgium
NATIONALITY Belgian
HEIGHT 193cm (6'4")
POSITION Defender
PL TEAMS Manchester City (2008-19)
NUMBER 4

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- x4 PREMIER LEAGUE
- x2 FA CUP
- x4 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **3** PFA TEAM OF THE YEAR APPEARANCES
- **8** JOINT-MOST SEASONS AS MAN CITY CAPTAIN
- **265** PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Simon Bellis / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy **Boxout image** Andrew Yates / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy **Left** PA Images / Alamy; **Top** Robin Parker / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy

BEST OF THE REST: DEFENDERS

Put the boot in with these tenacious tacklers at the back

Defenders are the backbone of any team, providing the stability and strength to thwart opposition attacks. The best defenders combine tactical intelligence, physical prowess and impeccable timing to neutralise threats and launch rapid counterattacks. From bone-crunching tackles to precise interceptions, the Premier League has played host to some of the world's best defenders. These are just a few of them.



RIO FERDINAND

Ferdinand played with four clubs in the Premier League, but he's best known for his 12 years with Manchester United, where he won six Premier League titles. Ferdinand was a pioneer among English-born defenders. He was one of the first Premier League centre-backs to play in a more continental manner, holding onto the ball and carrying it forward rather than hoofing it up the pitch.

IMAGE - © Jamie McDonald / Getty



JAMIE CARRAGHER

When Carragher turned up for his first day at Liverpool's academy, he made a major faux pas – he wore an Everton kit. But Carragher's childhood loyalties were soon forgotten as he forged a 17-year, one-club career at Anfield. A rock in Liverpool's defence, Carragher could play across the back four but was at his best as an old-fashioned, no-nonsense centre-back. He ended his career with two FA Cups, three League Cups and one Champions League title.

IMAGE - © Jamie McDonald / Getty

ASHLEY COLE

One of the finest left-backs in Premier League history, Cole modelled his defensive game on his Arsenal predecessor Nigel Winterburn and his offensive game on Brazilian Roberto Carlos. He won two Premier League titles with the Gunners before a controversial move to Chelsea paid off with another league medal and a Champions League title. Cole is one of two players to have won a league and FA Cup double with two different clubs.

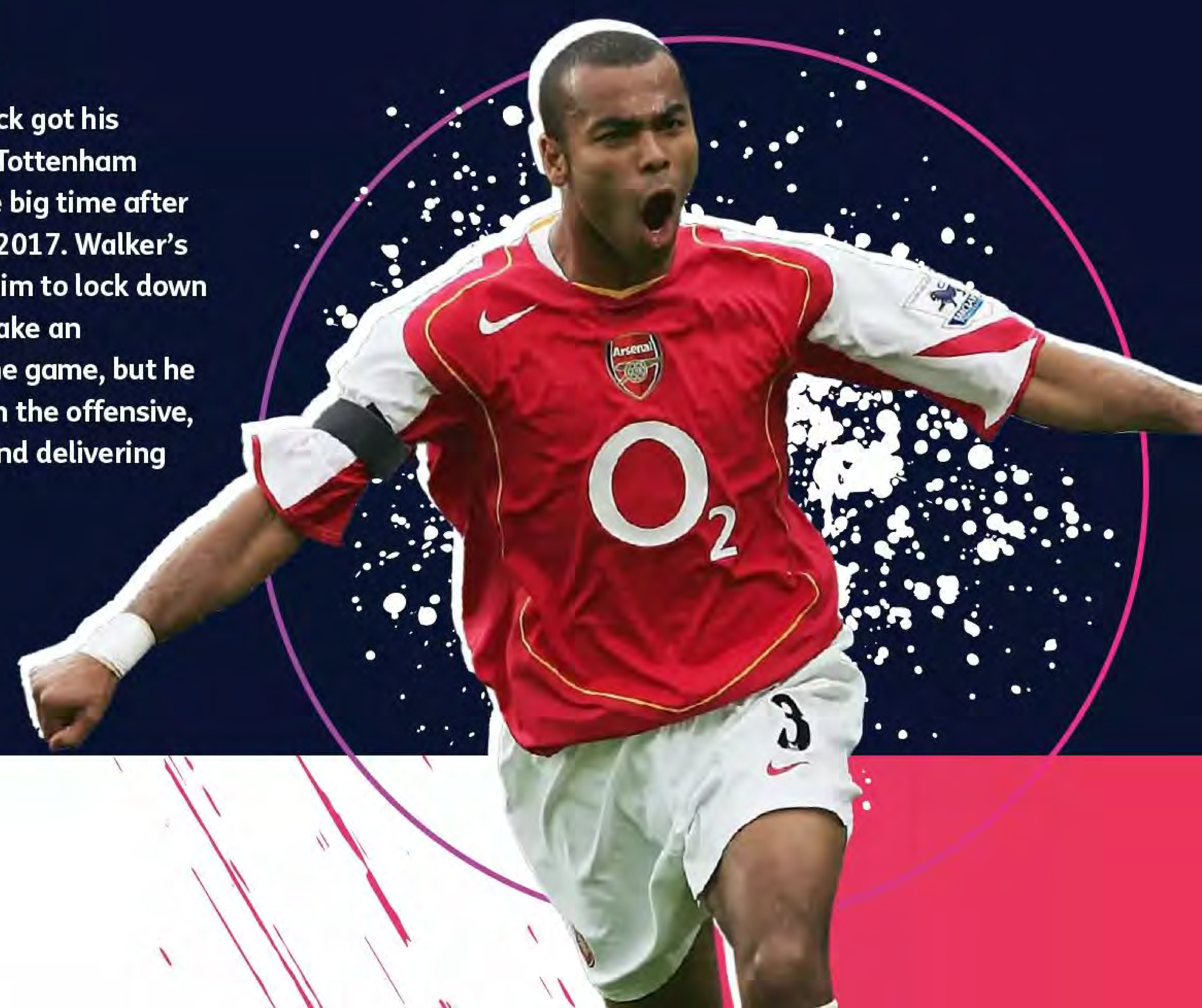
IMAGE - © Shaun Botterill / Getty



KYLE WALKER

Manchester City's right-back got his Premier League start with Tottenham Hotspur, but Walker hit the big time after joining Manchester City in 2017. Walker's defensive abilities allows him to lock down the entire right flank and take an opposition winger out of the game, but he also has the ability to go on the offensive, making overlapping runs and delivering precise crosses.

IMAGE - © Mark Pain / Alamy





KING HENRY
Arguably the greatest PL player of all time, Thierry Henry celebrates after scoring a vital goal during Arsenal's 2003-04 Invincibles season.

IMAGE: DAVID PRICE / ARSENAL FC VIA GETTY





STARBOY SAKA
Arsenal's homegrown hero Bukayo Saka has become one of the stars of Mikel Arteta's title-chasing team.

IMAGE: MARK PAIN / ALAMY



GOAL MACHINE
Erling Haaland has broken a host of Premier League records since joining Manchester City in 2022.



UNITED'S ACE
Since his stunning Premier League debut aged just 18, Marcus Rashford has been a key figure for a number of United managers.

IMAGE: PAUL MARRIOTT / ALAMY



SHOOTING STAR
Phil Foden picked up the Footballer of the Year and Premier League Player of the Season awards after a stunning 2023-24.



IMAGE: MARK PAIN / ALAMY



THE G.O.A.T.
Ronaldo with his iconic celebration after adding another goal to his Manchester United tally.



IMAGE ASH DONELON / GETTY



EGYPTIAN KING
Mo Salah's goals helped Liverpool win their first league title in 30 years in 2019-20.



IMAGE: MARK PAIN / ALAMY





IMAGE: ACTION PLUS SPORTS IMAGES / ALAMY

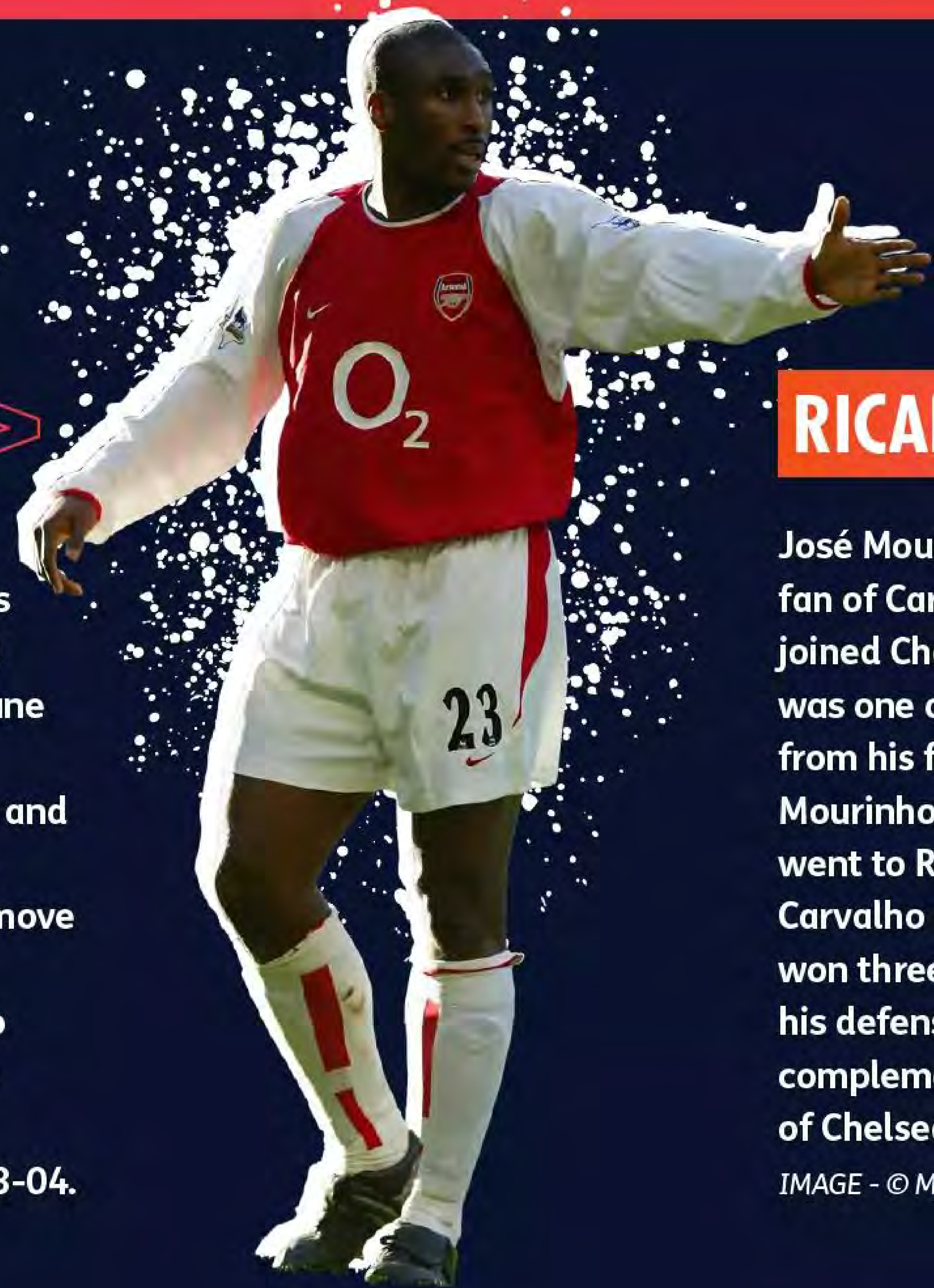

No room
for racism



SUPER SON
Tottenham's Son Heung-min has been one of the Premier League's most prolific attacking players since he arrived in England.

IMAGE: MARK PAIN / ALAMY


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eurostar



SOL CAMPBELL

Campbell was a hero among Tottenham Hotspur fans for his nine years of service in central defence, but the White Hart Lane faithful turned on him when Campbell saw out his contract and joined rivals Arsenal on a free transfer. It was a worthwhile move in terms of winning medals, however, as Campbell won two Premier League titles with the Gunners and was part of the undefeated Invincibles of 2003-04.

IMAGE - © Mark Thompson / Getty



RICARDO CARVALHO

José Mourinho must have been a big fan of Carvalho. When the Special One joined Chelsea from Porto, Carvalho was one of the first players he bought from his former club – and when Mourinho left Stamford Bridge and went to Real Madrid, he signed Carvalho again. In between, Carvalho won three Premier League titles and his defensive awareness perfectly complemented John Terry in the centre of Chelsea's defence.

IMAGE - © Mike Egerton / PA Images / Alamy



JAAP STAM

Stam didn't play in the Premier League for long – he was with Manchester United for just three seasons – but he left his mark on Old Trafford. Signed by Sir Alex Ferguson to shore up the back line, Stam won the Premier League title every year he played in England, and he added a Champions League for good measure. Ferguson describes the decision to sell Stam in 2001 as one of his biggest mistakes.

IMAGE - © Mark Leech / Offside / Getty

"FERGUSON DESCRIBES THE DECISION TO SELL STAM AS ONE OF HIS BIGGEST MISTAKES"



PATRICE EVRA

A rapid left-back who was as comfortable attacking as he was defending, Evra was unexpectedly strong and good in the air for a player of his size. Sir Alex Ferguson occasionally deployed him in the centre, but his best performances came on the flanks. He contributed to five Premier League titles and during his best season, 2008-09, was named to the Premier League, UEFA and FIFA teams of the year.

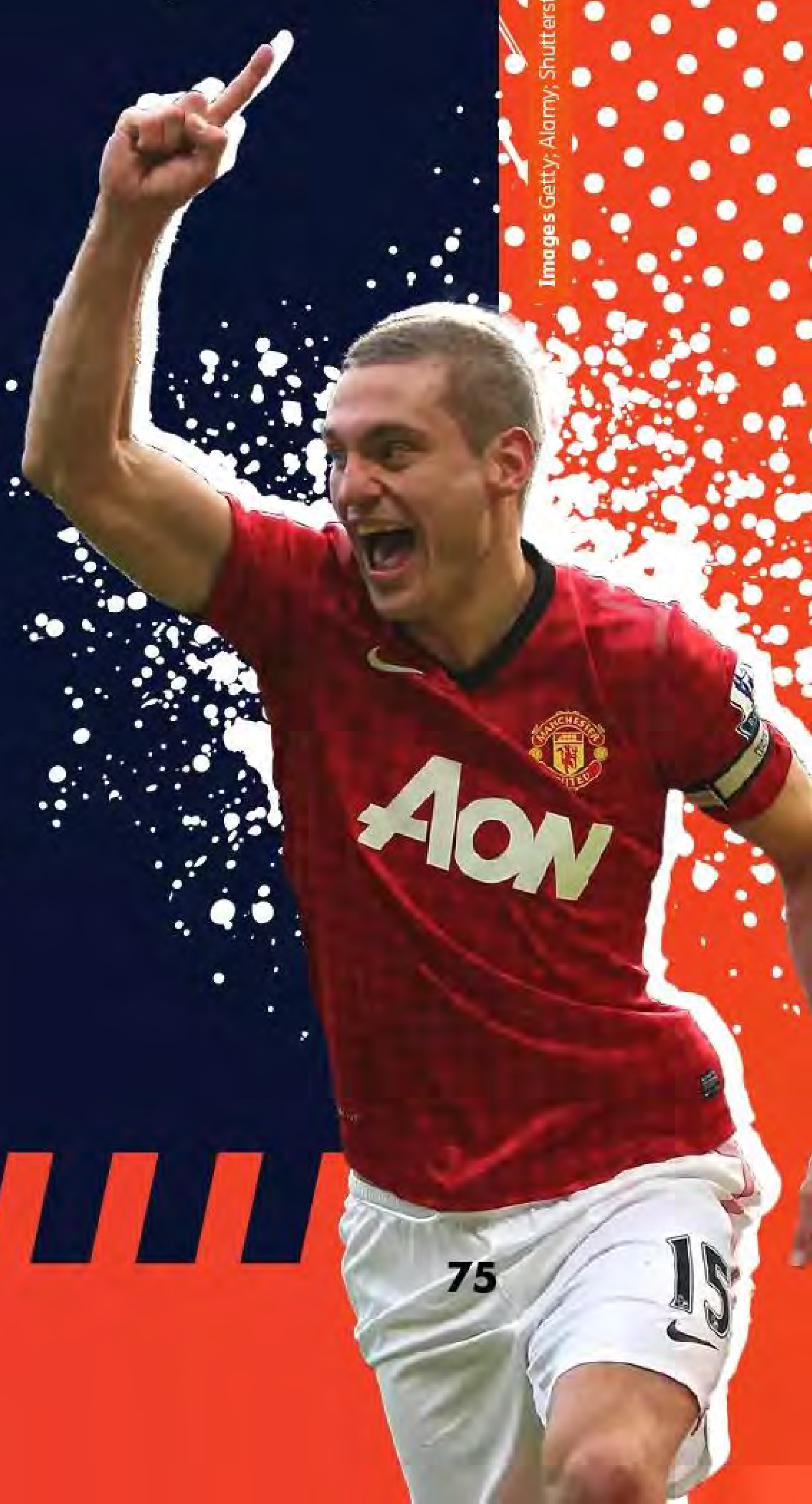
IMAGE - © Chris Young / AFP via Getty



LEDLEY KING

A one-club footballer who spent 14 seasons with Tottenham Hotspur, King became a first-team regular after the departure of Sol Campbell. Thierry Henry claimed that King was the best defender he faced, and King was certainly a dependable presence at centre-back. His only weakness was his knees. Chronic injuries limited his playing time, but King's natural talent allowed him to perform at a high level despite minimal time on the training pitch.

IMAGE - © Richard Sellers / Allstar via Getty



NEMANJA VIDIĆ

The only defender to have won the Premier League Player of the Season award twice, Vidić played alongside Rio Ferdinand at the heart of Manchester United's defence. It was a partnership made in heaven. Vidić picked up five Premier League titles while he was the tough-tackling enforcer to the graceful, ball-carrying Ferdinand. Vidić racked up 211 Premier League appearances and 15 goals with United before finishing his career at Inter Milan.

IMAGE - © Mike Egerton / PA Images / Alamy

Images Getty; Alamy; Shutterstock

FUN FACT

Bukayo Saka became the youngest Arsenal player in the Premier League era to score 50 goals.



BUKAYO SAKA

Known as Arsenal's 'Starboy', Saka's story is one of a continued rise and rise to become one of the PL's best

When Arsenal were at their very lowest in the Premier League, Bukayo Saka sent out a tweet to tell Arsenal fans that they "deserve more" than the football they'd been watching. He was still a teenager at the time: absolutely no one expected him to be the one to take responsibility.

But that's what has separated Saka from his peers from such a young age. The winger has never been afraid to put an entire club on his shoulders, bulldozing past full-backs with the carefree abandon of a street player and using the ball with the efficiency of a veteran. Gunners boss Mikel Arteta has built his team around the mercurial talents of Saka and even though he's still in his early twenties, he's already one of the most feared players in the country.

When he began, Saka was seen as flashy and exciting – now, he's one of the most dependable and consistent players in all of England. He may well go down as an Arsenal – and Premier League – legend.

WING WIZARD

WING WIZARD

BUKAYO SAKA

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	5 September 2001
BIRTHPLACE	London, England
NATIONALITY	English
HEIGHT	178cm (5'10")
POSITION	Forward
PL TEAMS	Arsenal (2018-present)
NUMBER	7

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1 FA CUP

% STATS & RECORDS

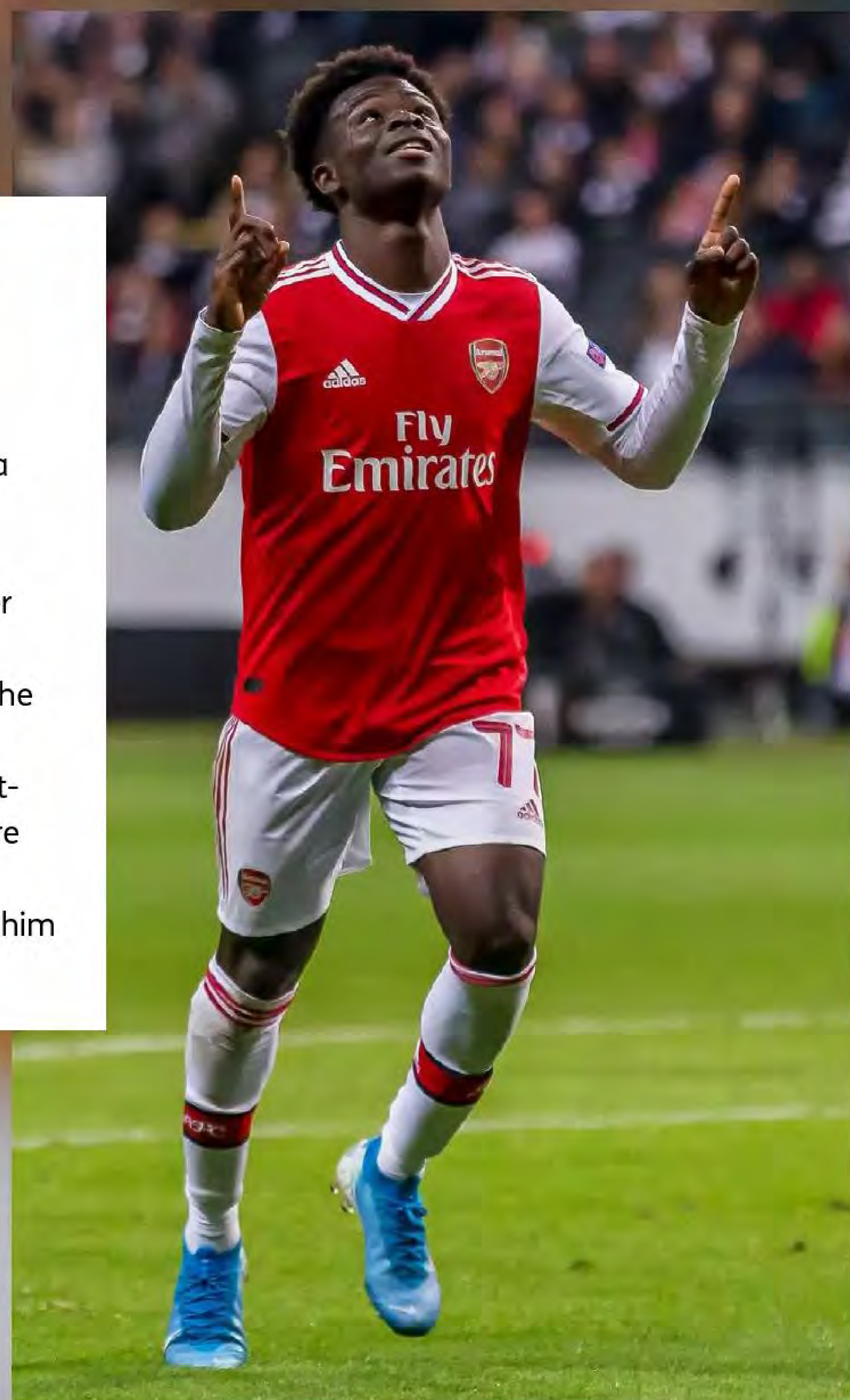
0.48 PREMIER LEAGUE GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS PER GAME

3 NUMBER OF PL GAMES MISSED BETWEEN 2021-22 AND 2023-24

91% PL PENALTY CONVERSION RATE

BREAKING THROUGH

Aged just 17 years old, Saka made his Premier League debut against Fulham to become the first-ever player born in 2001 to play in the league. It wasn't long until he was a key player for the Gunners, beginning as a left-back in an injury crisis before moving further forward. Arsenal fans were to adore him from the very start.



Below Saka's willingness to do all he can for his club, plus his ferocious talent, makes him a joy to behold

"EVEN THOUGH HE'S STILL IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES, HE'S ALREADY ONE OF THE MOST FEARED PLAYERS IN THE COUNTRY"





Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** TF-Images / Getty **Left** Mark Pain / Alamy **Insert images** Martin Dalton / Alamy



SAKA AND SMITH ROWE

With Arsenal a long way from the standard that Arteta demanded, it was two academy graduates who helped lift the Gunners to new heights. Saka and Emile Smith Rowe would become the joint subjects of a chant from the Emirates Stadium faithful, with arguably their statement moment as a duo coming in the North London Derby in 2021, as both youngsters got on the scoresheet in a 3-1 win. The feel-good factor was back. Sadly, after ongoing injury troubles and lack of game time, Smith Rowe left Arsenal to join Fulham in 2024, bringing an end to the partnership.

THE PENALTY MASTER

Arsenal were ready to challenge for a title in 2022-23 – and after the disappointment of missing out on Champions League football the season before, and missing a vital Euros penalty for England in 2021, Saka assumed penalty taking duties for his club. The most high-pressure came against Liverpool to win three points and keep Arsenal on track in 2022. Saka showed nerves of steel to slot it home.





"ANOTHER SEASON ANOTHER TITLE CHALLENGE, WITH SAKA ENDING THE 2023-24 SEASON AS ARSENAL'S PREMIER LEAGUE TOP SCORER ON 16 GOALS"

FUN FACT

Saka's favourite footballer ever is fellow Gunners hero, Thierry Henry.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Another season another title challenge, with Saka ending the 2023-24 season as Arsenal's Premier League top scorer on 16 goals. He was a quiet leader in the side as Arsenal came up just short once again, playing 35 times and also picking up nine assists. Perhaps his best goal came in the game at home to Nottingham Forest, earning him Arsenal's Goal of the Season award.

Images Shutterstock; **Images (clockwise from top left)** Craig Mercer / Alamy; Paul Marriott / Alamy; Charlotte Wilson / Offside / Getty



FUN FACT

Keane won the PFA Players' Player of the Year and Football Writers' Player of the Year in 2000.

ROY KEANE

A born leader, Keane was the fiery, beating heart of Manchester United's multiple title-winning team

Arriving at Old Trafford from Nottingham Forest in 1993 for a then-record £3.75 million, Roy Keane dominated Manchester United's midfield for 12 years. Unafraid of hard tackles and consistently putting in match-winning performances, his desire to win and no-nonsense combative attitude proved hugely inspirational. Manager Sir Alex Ferguson called him "the best midfield player in the world of his generation" – high praise indeed.

Keane won the Premier League in his first season at United – the year the club also picked up the FA Cup to seal the double. As his fellow players learned, he would have accepted nothing less, which is why he eventually became captain. Fans loved how he'd cover almost every blade of grass during the course of a game and how he could intelligently foresee tactical patterns. He evolved from operating box-to-box into a player able to drive the game from a deep position. He will forever be a Premier League legend.

MIDFIELD GENERAL

MIDFIELD GENERAL

ROY KEANE

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	10 August 1971
BIRTHPLACE	Cork, Republic of Ireland
NATIONALITY	Irish
HEIGHT	180cm (5'11")
POSITION	Midfielder
PL TEAMS	Nottingham Forest (1990-93), Manchester United (1993-2005)
NUMBER	16

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x7 PREMIER LEAGUE

x4 FA CUP

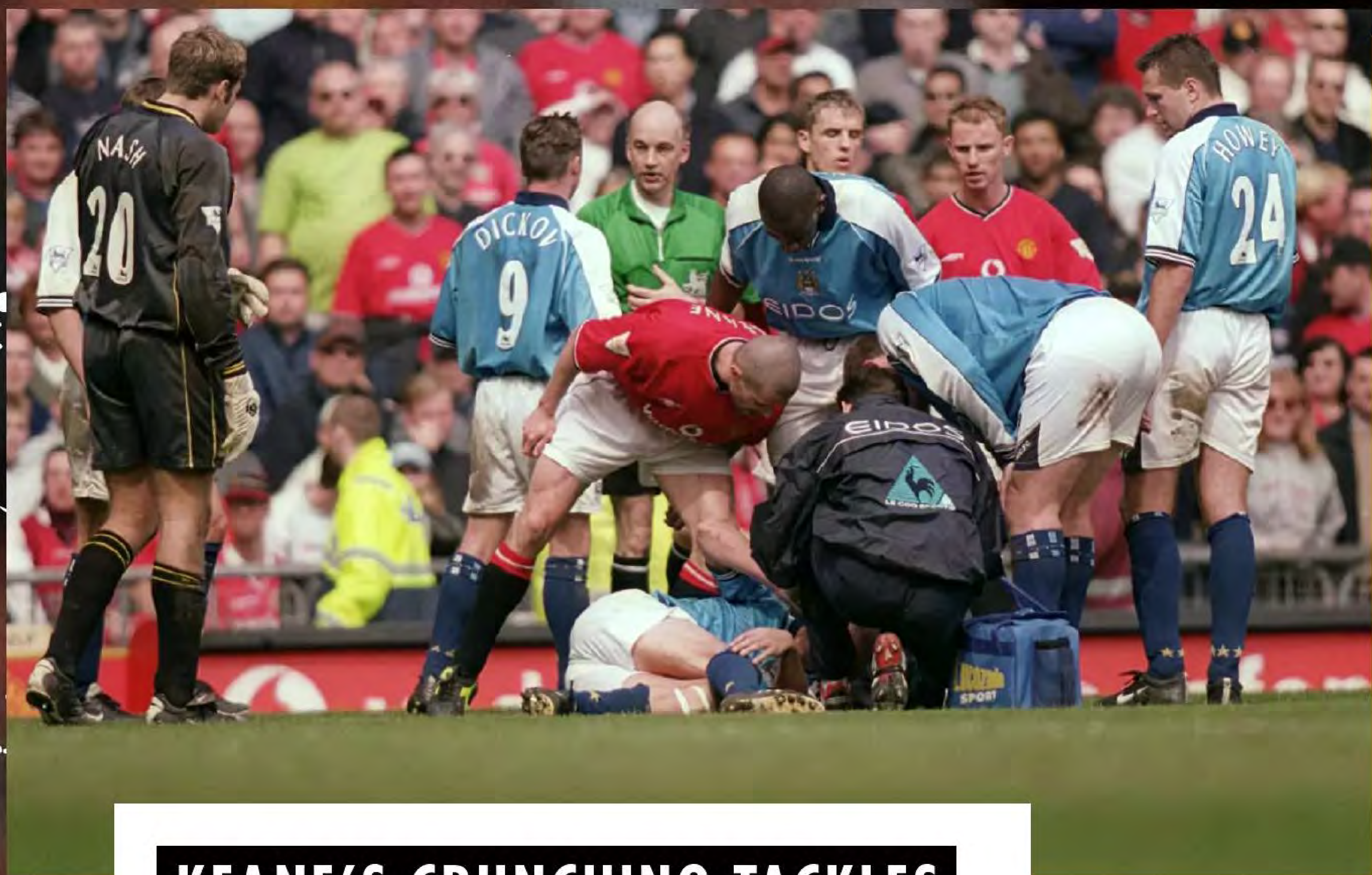
STATS & RECORDS

366 NUMBER OF PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES

39 NUMBER OF PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS

13 NUMBER OF CAREER RED CARDS, JOINT-MOST IN ENGLISH FOOTBALL



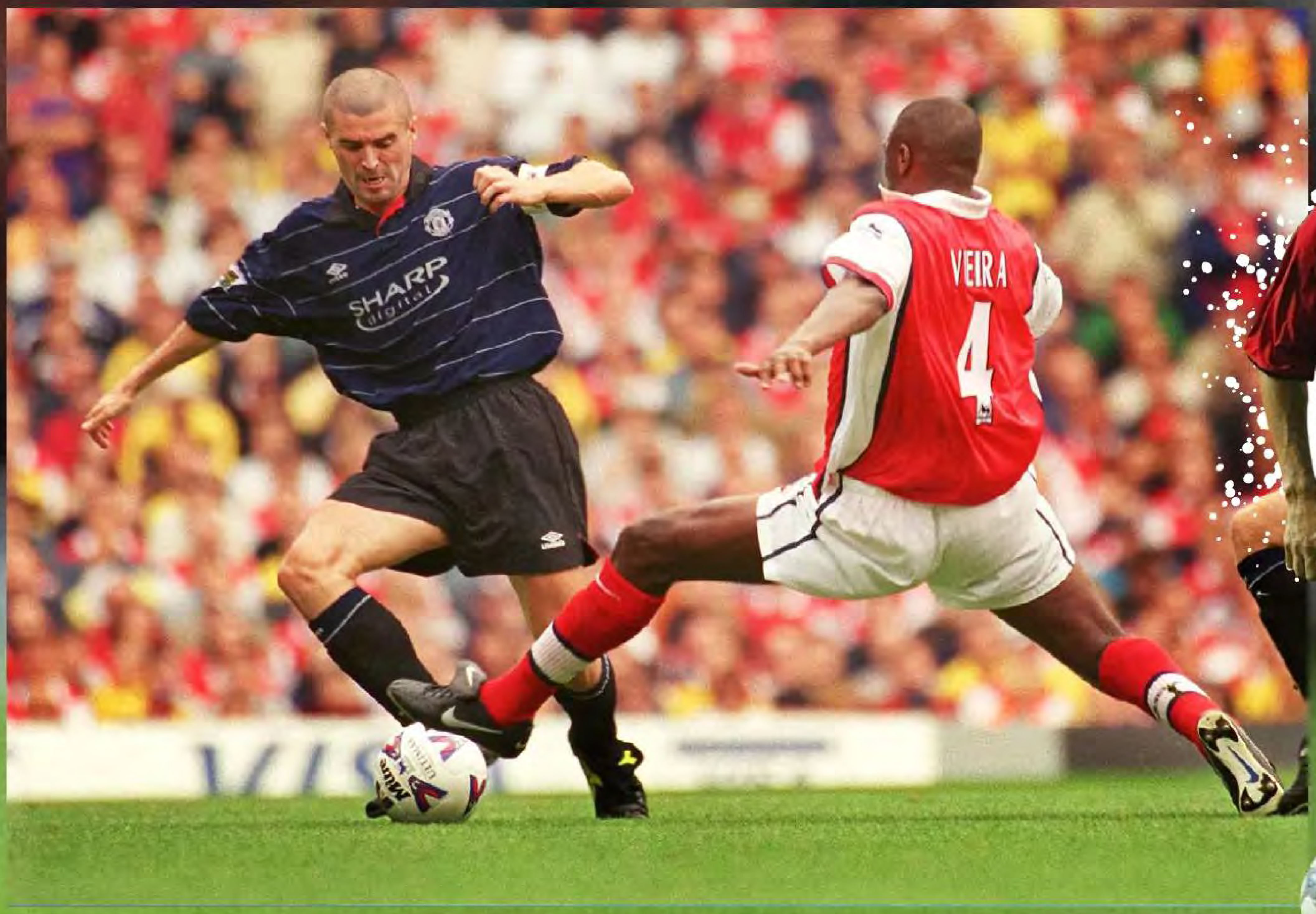


KEANE'S CRUNCHING TACKLES

During a game between Manchester United and Leeds United in September 1997, Keane lunged at Norwegian midfielder Alfie Haaland and ended up snapping his own cruciate ligament. As Keane lay on the turf in agony, Haaland accused him of faking the injury. In April 2001, Keane sought revenge. Facing Haaland again, who was now playing for Manchester City, Keane went in studs up, colliding with the player's knee. He was immediately sent off.

Left Keane signed for Manchester United after turning down a contract with Blackburn Rovers

Right Keane and Patrick Vieira had a fierce on-pitch rivalry during the years when United and Arsenal battled for the title





Images Shutterstock; **Main image** PA Images / Alamy **Boxout image** Gary M. Prior / Allsport / Getty **Left** Ben Radford / Getty **Inset image** Adrian Dennis / AFP via Getty

DAVID SILVA

Manchester City's midfield wizard dazzled for a decade in blue, creating, scoring and constantly producing moments of magic

Few footballers can make playing at the very highest level look effortless, but David Silva is one of them. During a decade of glittering success at Manchester City, the diminutive Spaniard established himself as one of the Premier League's greatest ever playmakers.

Some players require a period of adaptation when they move to a new team, league and country. Not Silva. Signed from Valencia in 2010, he immediately demonstrated the deft touch, silky close control and unerring vision that defined his play. There were goals, as well, and his first was arguably his best in a City shirt – a curling left-footed strike after a twisting, jinking run against Blackpool.

Initially deployed as a winger but just as comfortable operating everywhere across the midfield, Silva's superb eye for a pass saw him lead the league in assists with 15 during City's first title-winning season. He would go on to continue to be the creative hub through which everything flowed, right up to his departure in 2020.



Right Always elegant on the ball, Silva's talent and style of play gained him admirers beyond the City faithful



Far right A common sight: Silva surrounded by defenders but always able to retain control and find a pass

ICING ON THE CAKE

Silva was instrumental in one of City's most famous Premier League victories: the 6-1 demolition of Manchester United at Old Trafford in the 2011-12 season. Playing on the right wing, Silva was a menace throughout, and he would have his reward in injury time. First, the Spaniard tucked away a tidy finish to make it five after being played in by Edin Džeko. Then he returned the favour, controlling and then volleying a perfect through ball to assist the sixth.



MIDFIELD MAESTRO

DAVID SILVA

FUN FACT

City fans nicknamed Silva 'El Mago' – 'The Magician' in Spanish – for his style of play.

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 8 January 1986
BIRTHPLACE Arguineguín, Spain
NATIONALITY Spanish
HEIGHT 170cm (5'7")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS Manchester City (2010-20)
NUMBER 21

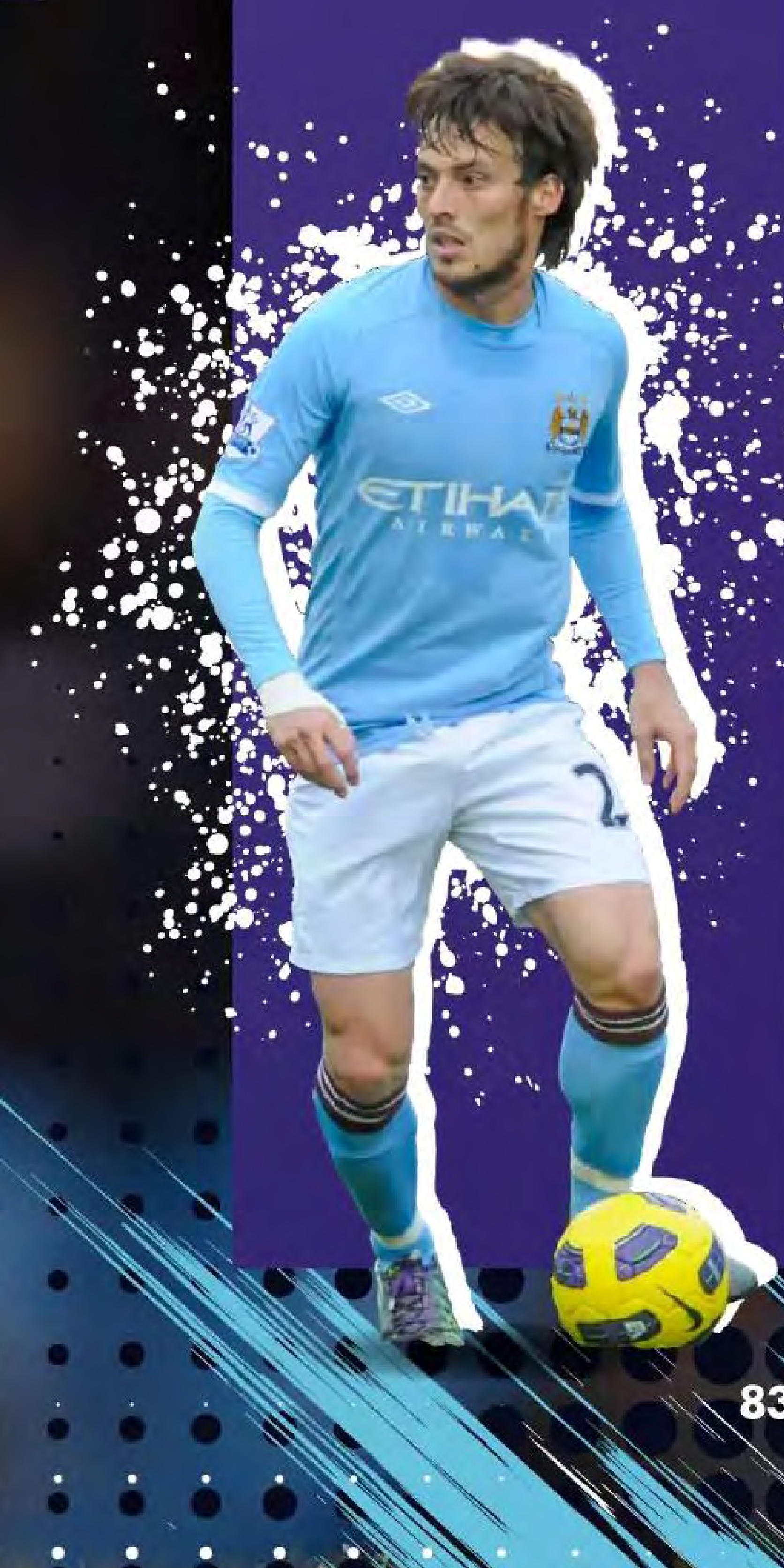
DOMESTIC HONOURS

x4 PREMIER LEAGUE
x2 FA CUP
x5 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

309 MOST PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES FOR MAN CITY
0.49 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS AND ASSISTS PER GAME
3 PFA TEAM OF THE YEAR APPEARANCES

"SILVA'S SUPERB EYE FOR A PASS SAW HIM LEAD THE LEAGUE IN ASSISTS WITH 15 DURING CITY'S FIRST TITLE-WINNING SEASON"



MOHAMED SALAH

Liverpool's Egyptian King spearheaded a new era of success on the Kop

Plenty of the top clubs have had iconic talismans that have defined some of their most successful spells – Manchester United had Cantona, Chelsea had Zola. For Liverpool, it is Mohamed Salah who has spearheaded their assault on the Premier League.

Returning to the English top flight after an unsuccessful spell at Chelsea, Salah had a point to prove – something he subsequently did many times over. It's probably fair to say that he hit the ground running, notching 32 goals in 36 league matches in his first season to seal the first of three Golden Boots.

The fulcrum of a devastating attacking trio alongside Sadio Mané and Roberto Firmino, he propelled the Merseysiders to their first Premier League win in 30 years, and continued to light up the Kop during the reign of Jürgen Klopp. Hopefully he'll continue to do so under new management for many more years to come.

FUN FACT

Salah is the first African player to score over 30 goals in a Premier League season.



PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPION

While the 2019-20 season was one to forget for many, the Covid-19 pandemic seeing fans forbidden from attending games, it bore witness to one of Liverpool's greatest triumphs in recent times. While his 19 league goals that season were his lowest at that point, Salah still played a starring role as his side ran away with the title.

GAME CHANGER



"HE PROPELLED THE MERSEYSIDERS TO THEIR FIRST PREMIER LEAGUE WIN IN 30 YEARS, AND HAS CONTINUED TO LIGHT UP THE KOP"

MOHAMED SALAH

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 15 June 1992
BIRTHPLACE Nagrig, Egypt
NATIONALITY Egyptian
HEIGHT 175cm (5'9")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Chelsea (2014-16), Liverpool (2017-present)
NUMBER 11

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- x1 PREMIER LEAGUE
- x1 FA CUP
- x1 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **157** PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS
- **226** GOAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM 263 PREMIER LEAGUE MATCHES
- **5** PREMIER LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARDS



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** Jon Bromley / MI News / NurPhoto / Alamy **Left** Cal Sport Media / Alamy



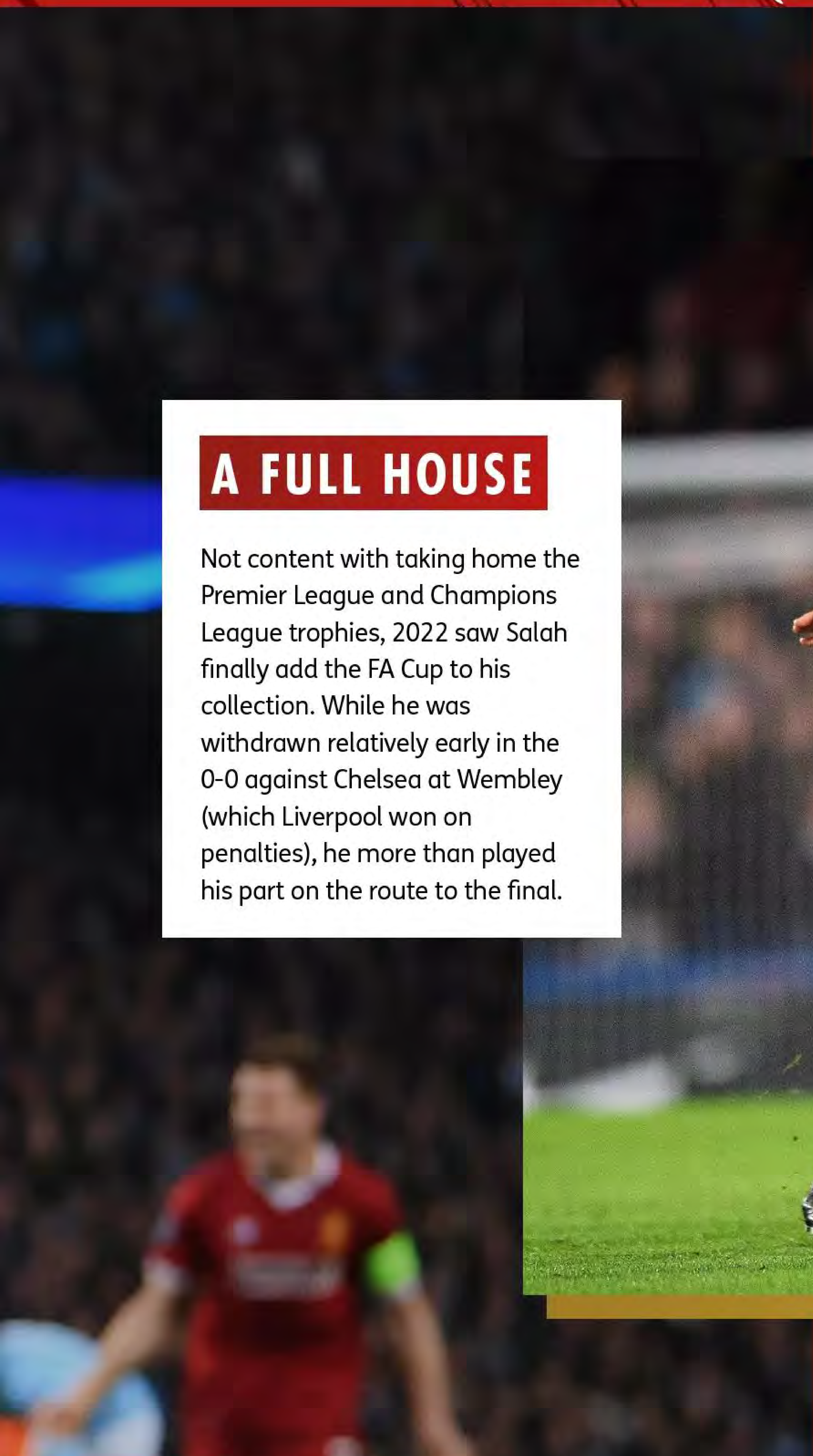
DEBUT SEASON

You could have been forgiven for forgetting that Salah had Premier League experience before signing for Liverpool, so few were the opportunities that he was given during his time at Chelsea. Times change, however, and his impact upon moving to Merseyside was instant and explosive, putting away 32 league goals and hoarding all manner of individual awards, including the Player of the Season and Golden Boot.

> **"HIS IMPACT UPON MOVING TO MERSEYSIDE WAS INSTANT AND EXPLOSIVE, PUTTING AWAY 32 GOALS"**

FUN FACT

A pair of Salah's boots have been on display in the British Museum.





FUN FACT
Salah is an ambassador for UNICEF.

A FULL HOUSE

Not content with taking home the Premier League and Champions League trophies, 2022 saw Salah finally add the FA Cup to his collection. While he was withdrawn relatively early in the 0-0 against Chelsea at Wembley (which Liverpool won on penalties), he more than played his part on the route to the final.



Left Salah has helped Liverpool to challenge Man City's dominance



CHARITY-FOCUSED

Alongside his football career, Salah has been involved in various forms of philanthropy. Placed at eighth in the *Sunday Times* Giving List in 2022, it was estimated that he has spent six per cent of his wealth on charitable causes. These have included donating £2.4 million to the National Cancer Institute in Cairo, Egypt, after it was damaged by a car bomb, as well as making various donations through the Egyptian Red Crescent.

Images Shutterstock; **Images (From left)** Laurence Griffiths / Getty; Mark Pain / Alamy; Ben Fisher / Alamy ; Mark Pain / Alamy;



FUN FACT

In 2018-19, Terry helped Aston Villa gain promotion to the Premier League as part of their coaching team.

JOHN TERRY

Captain Fantastic at Chelsea for years, John Terry left a lasting legacy in the Premier League

English football looks almost unrecognisable to how it did in 1992 – but no-nonsense defenders who defend with their lives have always been the one staple of the Premier League since its inception.

Perhaps no one sums up the rugged English centre-back better than John Terry, who represented Chelsea across three decades and five titles. Terry was an academy graduate of the Blues long before the Cobham production line began churning out talent yearly, and during the highs and the lows at the club, he led the side with bravery and brilliance at the back.

Terry's first title came in José Mourinho's 2004-05 league-winning side, at the heart of a defence which conceded just 15 times all campaign. He was to be a rock of every big Blues back four for the rest of his career, too, eventually ending up as a vocal presence in Chelsea's last title win under Antonio Conte. Few have ever had Terry's grit and guile.

DEFENSIVE ROCK

DEFENSIVE ROCK



THE BEST ENGLISH DEFENCE... EVER?

Arsenal's Invincibles won the title in 2004; in 2005 it was the turn of Chelsea's Impenetrables. Mourinho's men conceded just 15 goals all season, a PL record, with Terry captaining the Blues to a first title in 50 years – and no one could get past them. The team is still lauded as one of the greatest to lift the championship, and surely the best defence English football has seen.

Below Despite being a defender, Terry was no stranger to the scoresheet, notching 41 Premier League goals across his career



JOHN TERRY

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 7 December 1980
BIRTHPLACE London, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 187cm (6'2")
POSITION Defender
PL TEAMS Chelsea (1998-2017)
NUMBER 26

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x5	PREMIER LEAGUE
x5	FA CUP
x3	LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

214	PREMIER LEAGUE CLEAN SHEETS IN 492 GAMES
717	CHELSEA APPEARANCES IN ALL COMPETITIONS
4	PFA TEAM OF THE YEAR APPEARANCES



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** PA Images / Alamy **Boxout image** Associated Press / Alamy **Left** PA Images / Alamy **Insert** Mark Pain / Alamy

BEST OF THE REST: MIDFIELDERS

Meet the midfield maestros who left their mark on the top flight

Welcome to the engine room. No players cover more distance than midfielders, who operate from box to box in their quest to control possession, strangle the opposition and orchestrate attacks. Midfielders use their blend of exceptional skill and tactical intelligence to dictate the tempo of the game. Some have an eye for goal, others are more defensively minded, but everyone on this list had the ability to change the course of a game.



PAUL SCHOLES

A technically gifted player, Scholes slotted into Manchester United's central midfield as the attacking option alongside the steelier Roy Keane. Although he may not have been the quickest runner or fastest dribbler, Scholes cut opposing defences apart with accurate, intelligent passes. Later in his career, Scholes sat deeper and acted as a playmaker. Thanks to his longevity and one-club career, Scholes amassed the third-highest number of appearances in a United shirt.

IMAGE - © Ross Kinnaird / Allsport / Getty



EDEN HAZARD

Attacking midfield prodigy Hazard was still only 21 when he joined Chelsea, despite being a familiar face to French football fans for the previous five years. Over the next seven seasons with Chelsea, he won two Premier League titles and was named Player of the Season in 2015. Hazard was renowned for his dribbling and ability to wrong-foot defenders with his low centre of gravity.

IMAGE - © Simon Bellis / Sportimage via PA Images / Alamy

MICHAEL CARRICK

Although Carrick may be overshadowed by many of his Manchester United contemporaries, only he and Wayne Rooney have won the Premier League, FA Cup, Champions League, Europa League and Club World Cup. Before moving to Old Trafford, Carrick honed his skills in the Premier League with West Ham United and Tottenham Hotspur. Alex Ferguson utilised Carrick's passing and vision, switching United from a direct passing strategy to a more continental, passing style of football.

IMAGE - © Mike Egerton / PA Images / Alamy



YAYA TOURÉ

Touré was happy playing any position from deep-sitting striker to centre-back, but it was as a box-to-box midfielder that he spent his prime years with Manchester City. Touré tended to dominate from in front of his back four before pushing further forward towards the end of the game when his opponents tired – and it was in this role that Touré scored two late goals against Newcastle United during the run-in for City's first Premier League title win.

IMAGE - © Scott Heppell / Associated Press / Alamy



LUKA MODRIĆ



Modrić is a highly decorated midfielder who's won almost everything with Real Madrid, but prior to La Liga, he cut his teeth in the Premier League at Tottenham Hotspur. Modrić has always been a creative playmaker, but it was at White Hart Lane that he added defensive capabilities to his game. Modrić's trademark curling passes have cut through many defences, but he's also a dangerous dribbler.

IMAGE - © SCFotos - Football Stock / Alamy

ROBERT PIRES

Pires wasn't happy during his first Premier League season with Arsenal. He found the English game much more physical than the French Ligue 1, but after he'd adapted to more aggressive defences, he blossomed into a sublime left-winger. Pires was named Footballer of the Year after winning the Premier League in 2002 and outscored Dennis Bergkamp in Arsenal's unbeaten 2003-04 season.

IMAGE - © Stuart MacFarlane / Arsenal FC via Getty Images





CESC FÀBREGAS

Having come through Barcelona's youth teams, Fàbregas signed with Arsenal to get first-team football. He was soon the first name on Arsène Wenger's teamsheet. With excellent vision and passing ability, Fàbregas became a lynchpin in Arsenal's midfield. After a stint back at Barcelona, Fàbregas returned to England as a playmaker in Chelsea's midfield and won two Premier League titles at Stamford Bridge.

IMAGE - © SCFotos - Football Stock / Alamy



CLAUDE MAKÉLÉLÉ

A pioneer of the deep-lying playmaker role, Makélélé was so successful at winning the ball and distributing it effectively that his job came to be known as 'the Makélélé role' in English football. Though Makélélé wasn't the fastest or most technically adept player on his Chelsea team, he was the strong foundation that Chelsea's flair players built on, and it propelled the London club to the league title in 2005 and 2006.

IMAGE - © Mike Egerton / PA Images / Alamy

> **"MIDFIELDERS USE THEIR SKILL AND INTELLIGENCE TO DICTATE THE TEMPO OF THE GAME"**

N'GOLO KANTÉ

It's all about timing. Defensive midfielder Kanté joined Leicester City just before their miraculous run to the league title in 2016. That caught the attention of Chelsea scouts, and Kanté moved to Stamford Bridge in time for their title-winning campaign of 2017. Kanté had won two English league medals in two seasons with two different clubs, a feat last achieved by Eric Cantona. He was also named Footballer of the Year for his contribution to Chelsea's title.

IMAGE - © Simon Bellis / Sportimage via PA Images / Alamy



XABI ALONSO

An all-round midfielder, Alonso was a strong and aggressive tackler, visionary passer and had a powerful long shot that was often utilised for direct free-kicks and penalties. Upon arriving at Liverpool, Alonso helped transform the Reds under Rafael Benítez into a more technically skilled team. He formed an excellent central midfield partnership with Steven Gerrard at Liverpool and scored a crucial equaliser against AC Milan in the 2005 Champions League final.

IMAGE - © Paul Ellis / AFP via Getty Images



WAYNE ROONEY

A boy wonder who went on to become a Premier League legend, Rooney's career had it all

Most footballers develop over time, starting raw before refining and growing into their game. Wayne Rooney arrived, fully formed, with a bang at 16 years old. A boy in a man's body. After two breathlessly exciting seasons starring for his boyhood club Everton, Rooney was snapped up by Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United for £27 million – the highest fee ever paid for a teenager.

If there were nerves, they never showed. Rooney was a sensation from the off at United, instantly establishing himself and demonstrating the power, speed and unbridled imagination that had made him the most sought-after prospect in the country. It took until his third season with United to win the title, but that began a run of five championships in seven years.

Throughout his glittering, 15-year career, there were spectacular volleys and gut-busting runs, defence-splitting passes and fiery celebrations. A complete footballer, with the records to match.

FUN FACT

Rooney set a record with 11 straight seasons scoring at least ten Premier League goals.

Right Once at United, Rooney became a dominant force on the pitch

Below Rooney developed a special relationship with Sir Alex Ferguson, who signed him for United in 2004





GAME CHANGER

WAYNE ROONEY

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 24 October 1985
BIRTHPLACE Liverpool, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 176cm (5'9")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Everton (2002-04, 2017-18)
Manchester United (2004-17)
NUMBER 10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x5	PREMIER LEAGUE
x1	FA CUP
x3	LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

103	PREMIER LEAGUE ASSISTS – FOURTH ALL-TIME
3	PREMIER LEAGUE TEAM OF THE YEAR APPEARANCES
208	PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS – THIRD ALL-TIME



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** SportsImage / Alamy **Inset image** Paul Barker / AFP via Getty **Left** James Boardman / Telephoto Images / Alamy

REMEMBER THE NAME...

You've seen it so many times, but it never gets old. A 16-year-old Rooney in October 2002 at home against Arsenal, taking the ball under 'instant control' in the 89th minute, turning, and firing a vicious, dipping strike that clips the underside of David Seaman's crossbar on its way in. Add in an iconic bit of commentary from Clive Tyldesley and it's surely the most memorable first goal in Premier League history.

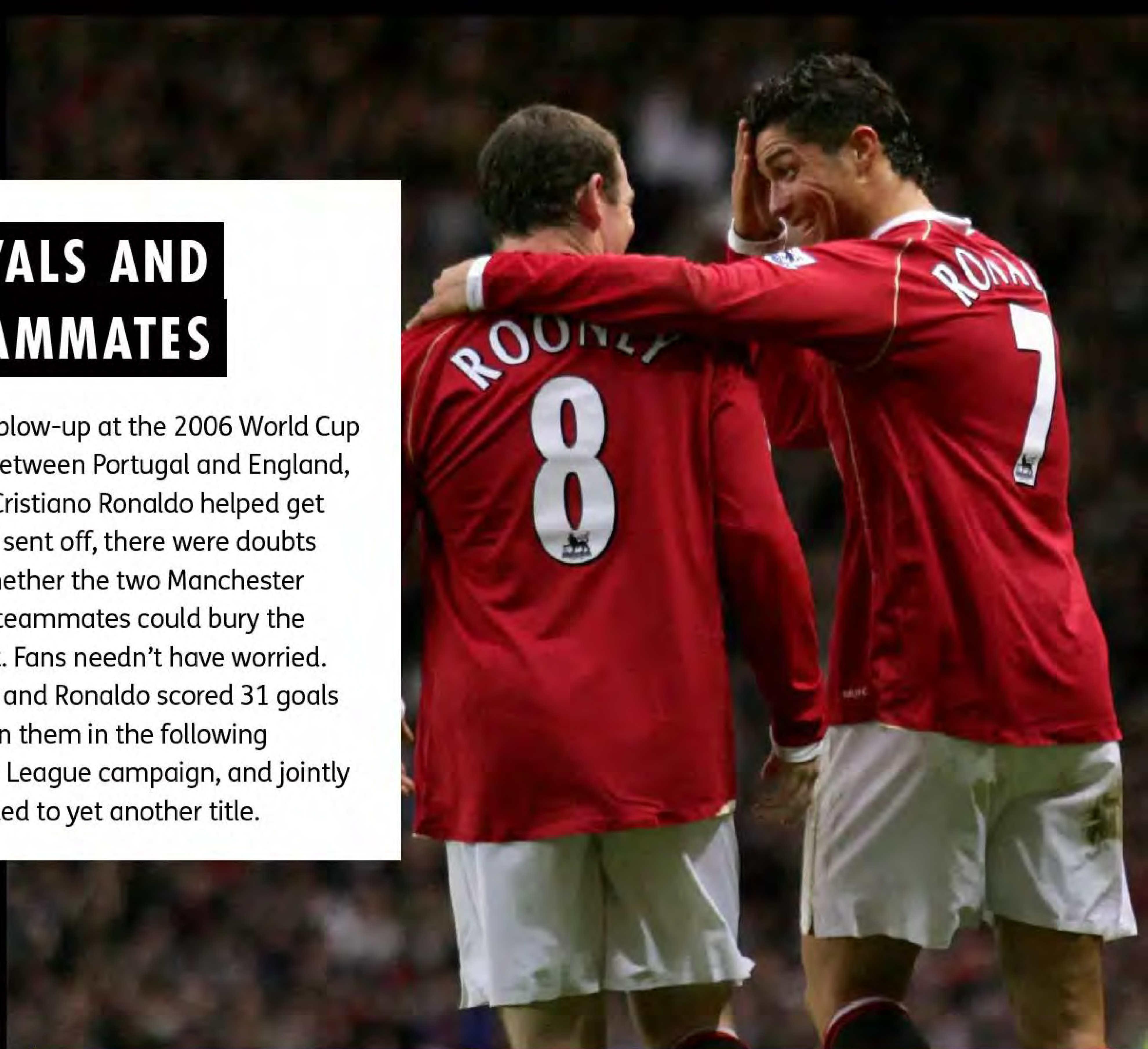




Right Rooney celebrates after scoring the goal to win Manchester United their 19th league title

RIVALS AND TEAMMATES

After a blow-up at the 2006 World Cup game between Portugal and England, where Cristiano Ronaldo helped get Rooney sent off, there were doubts over whether the two Manchester United teammates could bury the hatchet. Fans needn't have worried. Rooney and Ronaldo scored 31 goals between them in the following Premier League campaign, and jointly led United to yet another title.







A HOMECOMING HAT-TRICK

Rooney's return to his boyhood club was fleeting, but there were some notable highlights, chief among them a first Everton hat-trick against West Ham in 2017. The first was a penalty, converted at the second attempt, and the second a smart finish at the back post, but it was the third that stood out: a magnificent, first-time shot from the halfway line with Joe Hart stranded off his line.

GOAL OF THE DECADE

In a career littered with spectacular goals, this might just be the best of the lot. In the Manchester derby in 2011, Rooney adjusted himself as a deflected Nani cross dropped towards him in the box. With his back to goal, he launched himself off the ground, his right leg arcing upwards, making perfect contact and sending the ball sailing into the top corner. An iconic overhead kick that deservedly won Goal of the Season.

FUN FACT

Rooney scored 30 PL goals as a teenager – only Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen scored more.







DECLAN RICE

From West to East and now North London, Declan Rice has become one of the best midfielders in the world

Things weren't always easy for Declan Rice. The Londoner was released from boyhood club Chelsea as a teenager, finding himself having to start all over again: and he took that rejection personally.

Rice started life as a bustling centre-back but soon found his home in the West Ham midfield alongside veteran East Londoner Mark Noble, as the terrier alongside Captain Fantastic, organising the Irons. When he first burst through at the Hammers, however, he could have scarcely believed where his journey would take him: from scraping relegation to European football and winning the UEFA Conference League – before becoming England's most expensive player ever.

Rice is just getting started too, swapping the London Stadium for the Emirates, where he's now a key cog at Arsenal. The midfielder has been a palpable hit for Mikel Arteta and is looking for more silverware.

MIDFIELD GENERAL

MIDFIELD GENERAL



ARRIVING IN STYLE

Rice smashed Arsenal's transfer record when he arrived in 2023 – and it didn't take much time for him to endear himself to the Gooner faithful. At home to Manchester United in September 2023, the Gunners were drawing 1-1, struggling to find the all-important winner. Arsenal were given a scare when Alejandro Garnacho had a goal ruled out for offside – before Rice scored a dramatic late goal to give the Gunners the lead, latching onto a loose corner to fire home and help Arsenal secure the three points.



> **"THE MIDFIELDER HAS BEEN A PALPABLE HIT FOR MIKEL ARTETA'S ARSENAL AND IS LOOKING FOR MORE SILVERWARE"**

Left Rice has always worn the No.41 shirt, inheriting it at Arsenal after wearing it for West Ham

Right Rice played over 200 games for West Ham before eventually joining Arsenal in 2023

DECLAN RICE

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 14 January 1999
BIRTHPLACE London, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 188cm (6'2")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS West Ham United (2015-23), Arsenal (2023-present)
NUMBER 41

DOMESTIC HONOURS

N/A

STATS & RECORDS

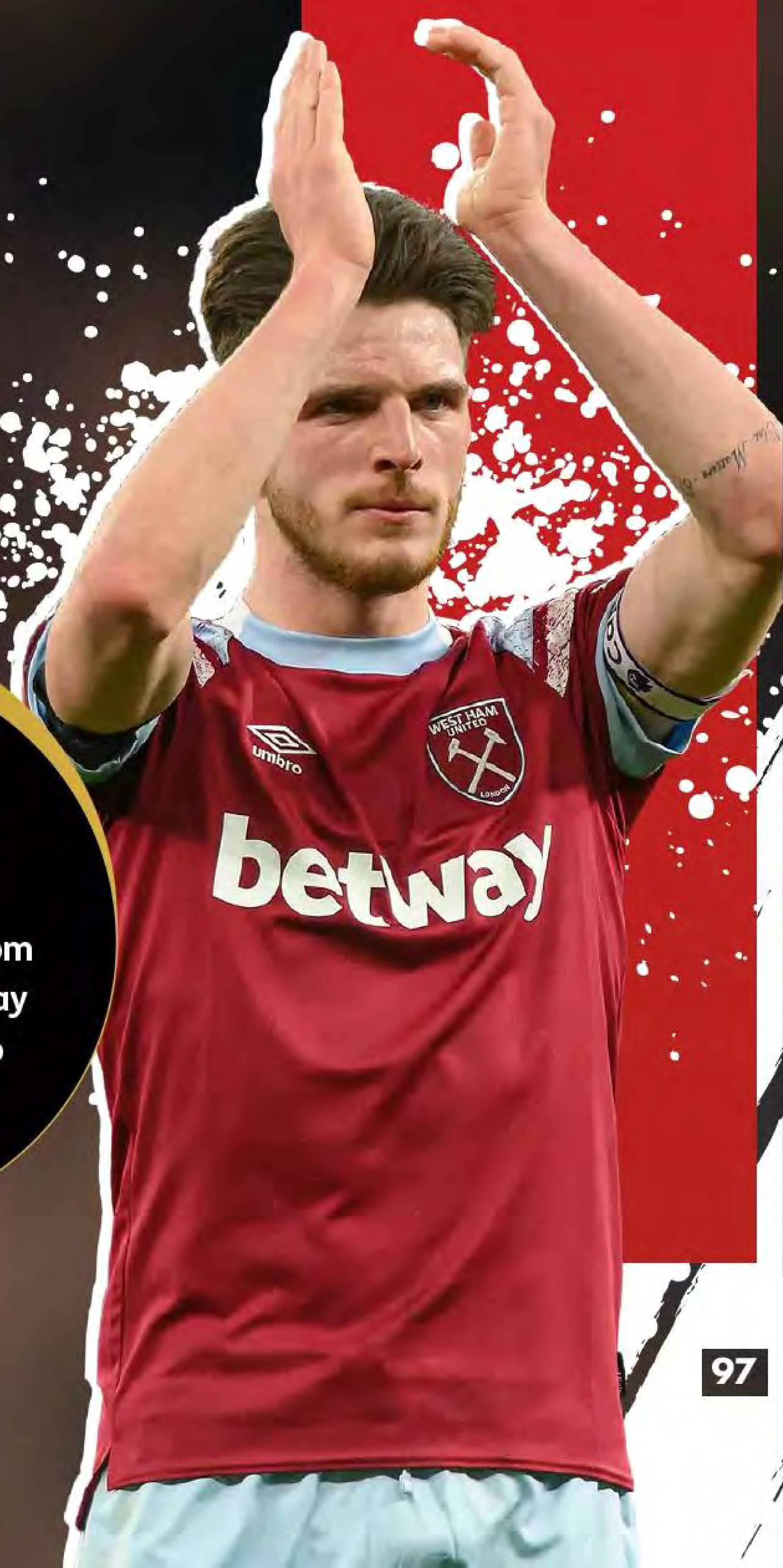
105M THE RECORD FEE (IN £) THAT ARSENAL PAID FOR RICE

204 PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES FOR WEST HAM

18 THE AGE THAT RICE MADE HIS DEBUT FOR WEST HAM

FUN FACT

Rice was released from Chelsea on the same day as Eddie Nketiah, who he later played with at Arsenal.



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Left** Mark Pain / Alamy

LUIS SUÁREZ

English football has known some devastating strikers – but few as fearsome as Liverpool's Luis Suárez

Liverpool signed Luis Suárez on the same day as Andy Carroll arrived at Anfield for an eye-watering fee, having just sold Fernando Torres to Chelsea. The other two made headlines, but it was Suárez who made history.

The Uruguayan was one of the deadliest strikers of a generation, eventually ending up at Barcelona to play alongside Lionel Messi and Neymar. In England, however, he terrorised defences with his movement, speed and eye for goal.

Liverpool came within a whisker of the title in 2013-14 under Brendan Rodgers, with Suárez scoring 31: it was one of the most breathtaking individual campaigns in the history of the Premier League. In truth, however, the rest of the team were being carried by the super No.7. The Reds finished eighth the following year, without their talisman.

It underlined just how good Suárez was. Few Premier League stars have ever surfed the same heights.

THE NEW 'SAS'

They say defences win you trophies, but it was Liverpool's attack that set up the title challenge of 2013-14. Suárez was paired up front with Daniel Sturridge, with Raheem Sterling drifting behind – and the three complemented each other brilliantly. Sterling was the creative spark, while Sturridge would do the running, leaving Suárez to bully opponents, press high and, most importantly, finish chances off. They were unstoppable.





GOAL HERO

"THE URUGUAYAN WAS ONE OF THE DEADLIEST STRIKERS OF A GENERATION, EVENTUALLY ENDING UP AT BARCELONA TO PLAY ALONGSIDE LIONEL MESSI AND NEYMAR"

LUIS SUÁREZ

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 24 January 1987
BIRTHPLACE Salto, Uruguay
NATIONALITY Uruguayan
HEIGHT 182cm (6'0")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Liverpool (2011-14)
NUMBER 7

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

31 PL GOALS IN HIS FINAL LIVERPOOL SEASON


0.63 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS PER GAME

23M THE FEE (IN £) LIVERPOOL PAID AJAX FOR SUÁREZ



FUN FACT

After being labelled a diver by David Moyes in 2012, Suárez celebrated by diving in front of the then-Everton boss.



ALAN SHEARER

He's the Newcastle United icon who lit up the Premier League with his incredible goalscoring exploits

FUN FACT

Shearer's Testimonial against Celtic was celebrated by 52,275 fans at St James' Park.

ALAN SHEARER



BACK-TO-BACK FINALS

Shearer bagged five goals during a storming FA Cup run in 1998, which saw Newcastle United reach the final against the recently crowned Premier League champions Arsenal. Alas, Shearer didn't score that day, with Newcastle losing 2-0, but there was another chance in 1999 when his team came up against Manchester United, who had also just won the Premier League title. However, it wasn't meant to be as once again, Newcastle ended up losing by exactly the same score.

Left Shearer scored more than 30 goals in three consecutive seasons in the Premier League

Below Shearer celebrates winning the Premier League title with Blackburn Rovers in 1995

Alan Shearer certainly had an eye for goal. Capable of striking with both feet and using his height to his full advantage, he scored a staggering 260 times over the course of his 441 Premier League appearances. He bagged 34 goals alone in the 1994-95 season with Blackburn Rovers – the one in which he picked up his sole title-winning medal – where he formed a strong partnership with Chris Sutton.

Shearer later moved to his hometown club, Newcastle United, for a then world record £15 million, where he became a cult hero among the St James' Park faithful. Initially forming an enviable partnership with Les Ferdinand and later teaming up well with Nolberto Solano, Shearer's ability to hold the ball combined with uncanny accuracy, power and placement, saw him score from all angles. He was also able to adapt his game in his later years when his pace inevitably faded.

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 13 August 1970
BIRTHPLACE Newcastle upon Tyne, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 183cm (6'0")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Blackburn Rovers (1992-96), Newcastle United (1996-2006)
NUMBER 9

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1 PREMIER LEAGUE

STATS & RECORDS

0.59 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS PER GAME

4 CONSECUTIVE SEASONS SCORING MORE THAN 25 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS

3 PREMIER LEAGUE GOLDEN BOOT AWARDS IN A ROW



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Shaun Botterill / Getty; **Boxout image** Clive Brunskill / Getty; **Left** Clive Brunskill / Getty



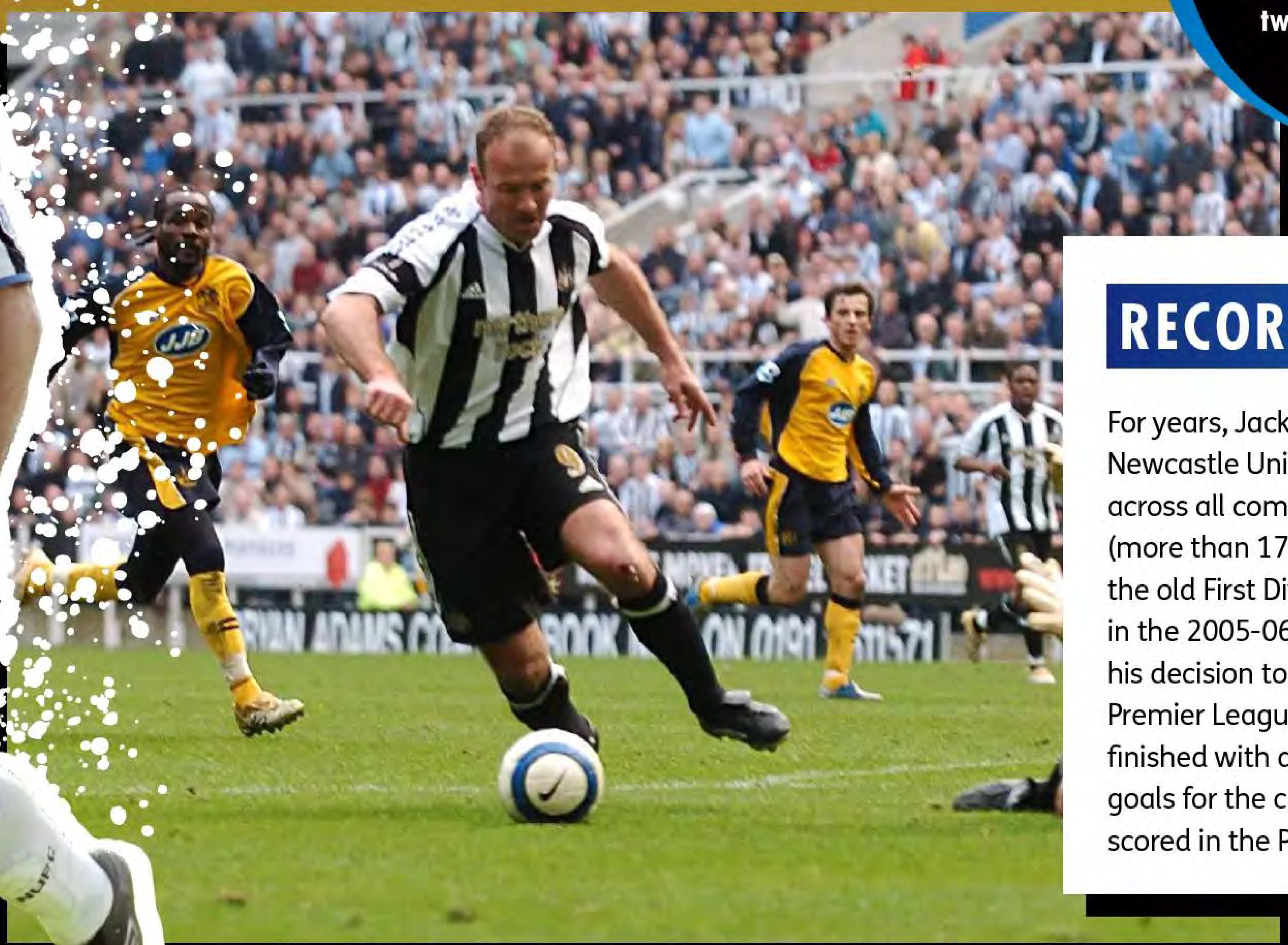
HAT TRICK HERO

It didn't take Shearer very long to make a big impact at Newcastle United and, on 2 February 1997, he scored his first hat-trick for the club in a 4-3 win against Leicester City. But that wasn't actually unusual. Shearer scored 11 hat-tricks in total, one less than the record holder Sergio Agüero. Nine of those were scored for Blackburn Rovers between 23 October 1993 and 16 March 1996 – and five of them were in the 1995-96 season alone!

FUN FACT

Shearer was one of the first two players inducted into the Premier League Hall of Fame.





RECORD BREAKER

For years, Jackie Milburn had been Newcastle United's leading goalscorer across all competitions with 200 goals (more than 170 of which were scored in the old First Division). But that changed in the 2005-06 season. Having reversed his decision to retire to pursue one more Premier League season, Shearer finished with an overall tally of 206 goals for the club. Of those, 148 were scored in the Premier League.





"SHEARER KEPT SCORING RIGHT UNTIL THE END AND, RATHER FITTINGLY, HIS FINAL GOAL CAME AGAINST NEWCASTLE'S ARCH RIVALS, SUNDERLAND"

BOWING *OUT*

Shearer kept scoring right until the end and, rather fittingly, his final goal came against Newcastle's arch rivals, Sunderland. He grabbed a goal in the 4-1 victory on 17 April 2006 but misfortune struck when he was forced off with an injury that effectively ended his playing career. He would be back, however, returning as manager on 1 April 2009 for the remaining eight games of the season, although he couldn't prevent the club's relegation.

ALISSON BECKER

A titan of Liverpool's title-winning side, Alisson is one of the best goalkeepers of his generation

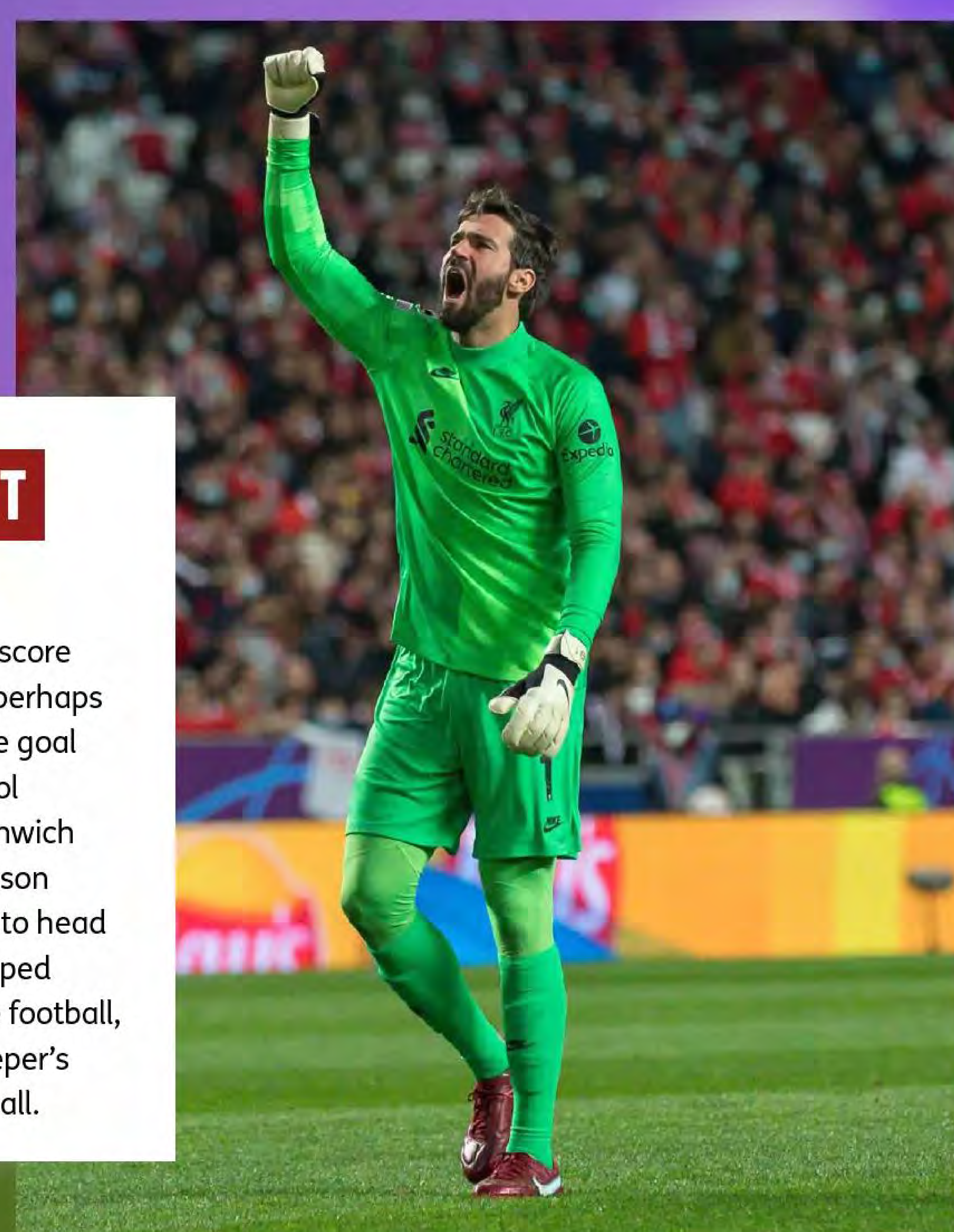
Jürgen Klopp had assembled just about every aspect of his Liverpool team: the front three of Mané, Firmino and Salah were firing in attack, while Virgil van Dijk had steadied the ship in defence.

Alisson Becker was the final piece of the puzzle: a world-class goalkeeper to give the Reds the edge between the sticks. While some goalkeepers are good with their feet and others better at shot-stopping, the Brazilian has always been elite in both areas, breeding confidence throughout the side. In Klopp's penultimate season, he saved a statistical average of 11 goals – more than anyone in Europe.

But it was in the title wins that Alisson repaid his £65 million transfer fee. The custodian was a vital presence in goal for the Premier League, Champions League and League Cup trophies that were brought back to Merseyside. He's in a league with the club's greatest-ever keepers – and the Premier League's, too.

FUN FACT

A devout Christian, Alisson has been nicknamed 'the Holy Goalie' by teammate van Dijk.



LIVERPOOL'S MOST POPULAR GOAL?

Mané, Firmino and Salah combined to score nearly 400 goals between them – but perhaps the Reds' most popular Premier League goal came from a goalkeeper. With Liverpool needing inspiration away to West Bromwich Albion during the 2020-21 season, Alisson came up for a corner and rose highest to head a late winner into the net. The goal helped Klopp's side secure Champions League football, with fans marvelling over their goalkeeper's technique when connecting with the ball.

TOP STOPPER



> "ALISSON WAS THE FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE: A WORLD-CLASS GOALKEEPER TO GIVE THE REDS THE EDGE BETWEEN THE STICKS"

ALISSON BECKER

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 2 October 1992
BIRTHPLACE Novo Hamburgo, Brazil
NATIONALITY Brazilian
HEIGHT 193cm (6'4")
POSITION Goalkeeper
PL TEAMS Liverpool (2018-present)
NUMBER 1

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1 PREMIER LEAGUE
x1 FA CUP
x1 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

86 PREMIER LEAGUE CLEAN SHEETS IN FIRST 201 GAMES

2 GOLDEN GLOVE AWARDS

22 PL GOALS CONCEDED IN HIS DEBUT SEASON



Images Shutterstock; **Main Image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout Image** Alexandre Sousa / Alamy **Left** MatchDay Images Limited / Alamy

PATRICK VIEIRA

Vieira would become Wenger's first Arsenal signing – and he'd come to represent the best of the Frenchman's football

When Arsène Wenger first arrived at Arsenal, the Gunners team knew very little about their new boss. But looking over at his first signing in North London, Patrick Vieira, they knew that he could at least recognise talent when he saw it.

Vieira was always going to thrive in England. An all-action midfielder with long legs and a sharp mind, he could win the ball when the odds were against him and drive his team forward when the chips were down. The Frenchman learned how to channel his aggression to become the assured leader in Arsenal's greatest-ever sides, becoming the box-to-box Rolls Royce that everything went through.

He left Arsenal in 2005, returning in his twilight to an emerging Manchester City side. Some would claim that the Gunners never replaced him, even a decade or so on. And how could they? Vieira did everything: it was impossible to even find an imposter.

FUN FACT

Captain Vieira scored the final goal of the Invincibles season – just as captain Adams had in the '98 title-winning season.

MIDFIELD GENERAL



MIDFIELD GENERAL

PATRICK VIEIRA

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	23 June 1976
BIRTHPLACE	Dakar, Senegal
NATIONALITY	French
HEIGHT	193cm (6'4")
POSITION	Midfielder
PL TEAMS	Arsenal (1996-2005), Manchester City (2010-11)
NUMBER	4

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x3 PREMIER LEAGUE

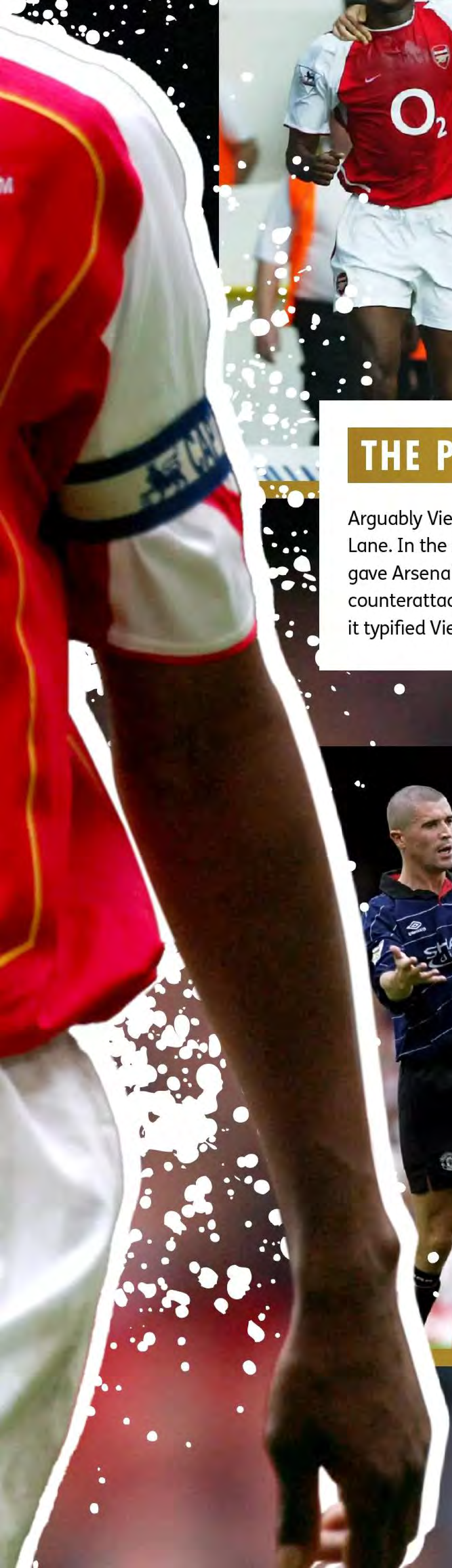
x5 FA CUP

STATS & RECORDS

8 JOINT-MOST PREMIER LEAGUE RED CARDS

65 COMBINED PL GOALS AND ASSISTS

49 PL GAMES UNBEATEN WITH ARSENAL BETWEEN 2003 AND 2004

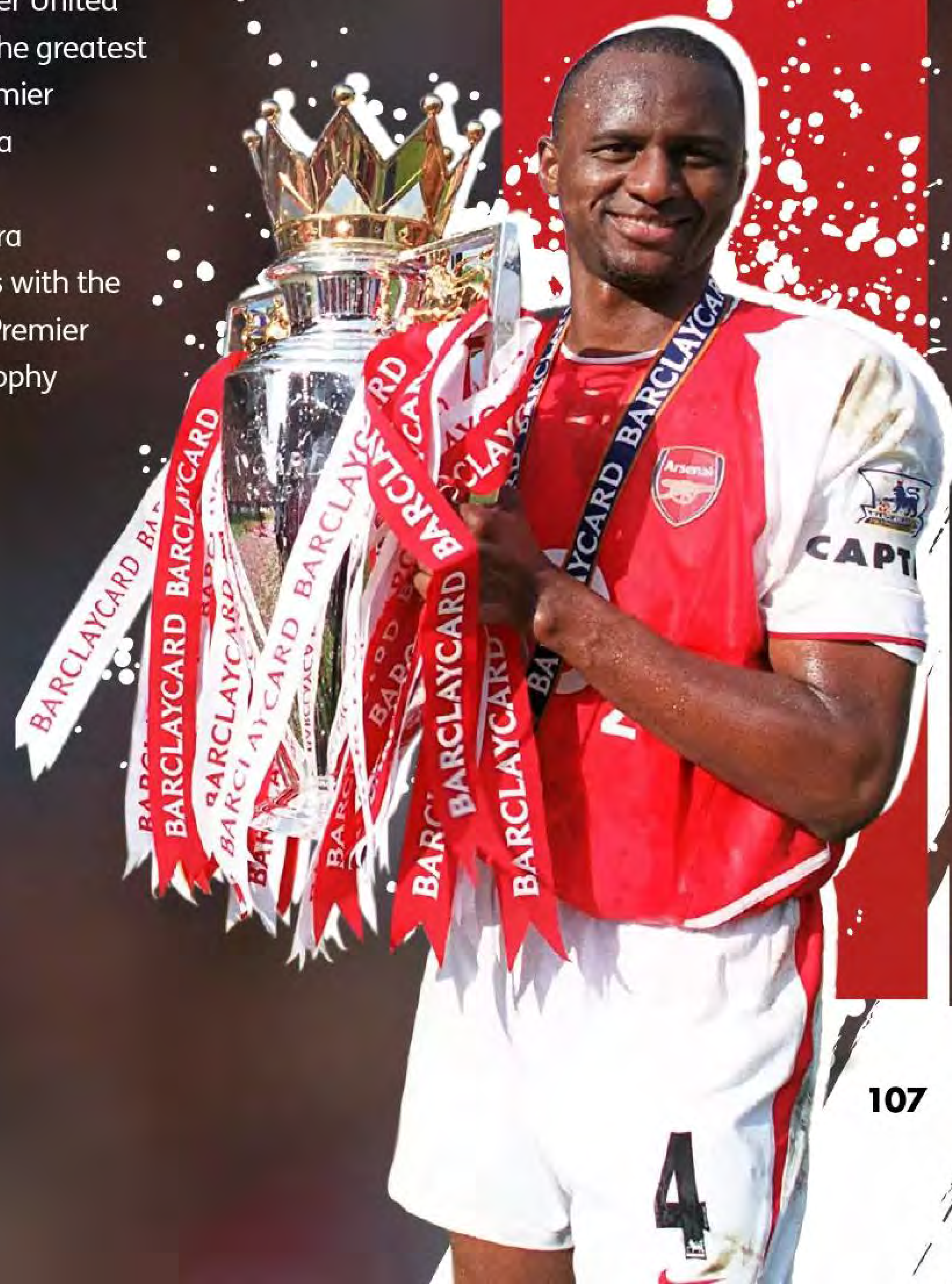




THE PARTY-STARTER

Arguably Vieira's greatest moment in an Arsenal shirt came in 2004 at White Hart Lane. In the all-important game that could win the Gunners the title, the captain gave Arsenal the lead against their bitter rivals, finishing off a textbook counterattack. It set the Gunners on their way to winning the title unbeaten – and it typified Vieira's athleticism, precision and brilliance in the big moments.





Left Vieira's rivalry with Roy Keane of Manchester United is one of the greatest of the Premier League era

Right Vieira celebrates with the 2003-04 Premier League trophy



FUN FACT

Beckham was part of the 'Class of '92' alongside Nicky Butt, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes and the Neville brothers.

DAVID BECKHAM

Manchester United's golden boy became a global celebrity, but always had the talent to match

David Beckham – the man, the icon, the brand – is so ubiquitous today that it can be easy to overlook David Beckham, the footballer. Which is unfortunate, because for all the headlines, the scandals and the photoshoots, Beckham is, first and foremost, one of the finest players ever to grace the Premier League.

And if we're specifically focused on striking the ball, there's an argument that Beckham is the best ever. His set piece delivery was unparalleled, his range of passing incredible. His highlight reel is a collection of some of the most outrageous strikes, volleys, crosses and through balls that the league has ever seen.

He was part of an exceptional Manchester United team, of course, and coached by the greatest manager in Premier League history in Sir Alex Ferguson. But Beckham's goals, assists and midfield dynamism were fundamental to United's success. He earned his six Premier League titles.

Above No one has mastered the dead ball quite like Beckham, who was absolutely lethal from set pieces

Right Through the years, Beckham's sometimes outrageous style – and hair – has caused plenty of conversation and controversy

MIDFIELD MAESTRO



DAVID BECKHAM

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 2 May 1975
BIRTHPLACE London, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 183cm (6'0")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS Manchester United (1992-2003)
NUMBER 7

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x6 PREMIER LEAGUE
x2 FA CUP

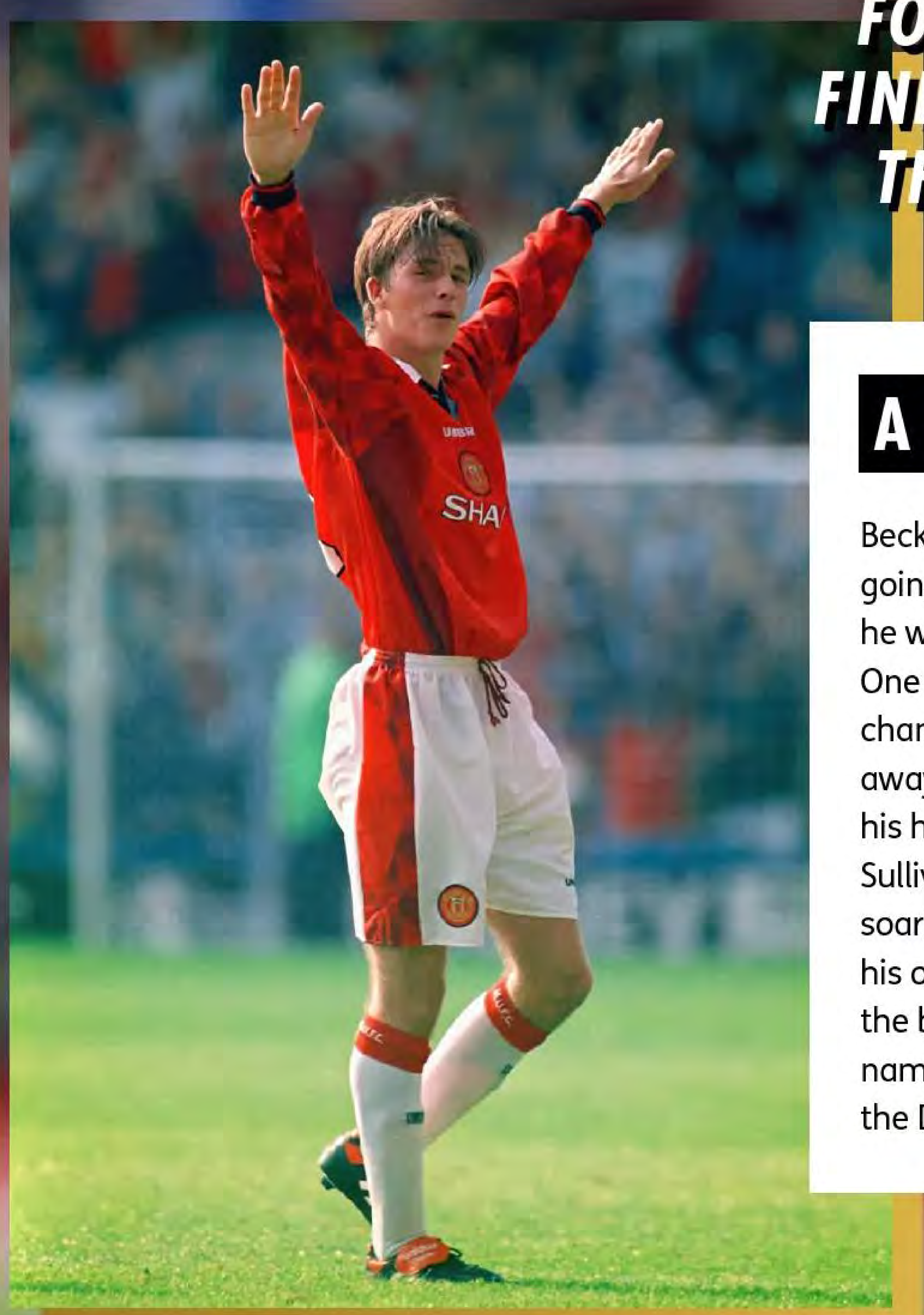
STATS & RECORDS

18 FREE-KICKS SCORED, MOST IN PREMIER LEAGUE HISTORY

3 TIME PREMIER LEAGUE ASSISTS LEADER

4 PFA TEAM OF THE YEAR APPEARANCES

"BECKHAM IS, FIRST AND FOREMOST, ONE OF THE FINEST PLAYERS TO GRACE THE PREMIER LEAGUE"



A SEISMIC STRIKE

Beckham was already a title winner going into the 1996-97 season, but he wasn't yet a household name. One moment on the opening day changed that. With United 2-0 up away to Wimbledon, Beckham lifted his head and spotted goalkeeper Neil Sullivan off his line. An outrageous, soaring shot left his boot just inside his own half and touched down in the back of the net. It was later named the Premier League Goal of the Decade.



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Laurence Griffiths / Getty **Boxout image** Michael Cooper / Allsport / Getty **Left** Matthew Peters / Manchester United via Getty **Top** John Peters / Manchester United via Getty

BEST OF THE REST: FORWARDS

From King Cole to God, these clinical strikers drove their teams to victory after victory

Football is a simple game at heart: score more than the opposition. No team can win trophies without getting the ball in the back of the net, and forwards bask in the glory when a goal is scored. Some are playmakers, others are outright strikers, but all these forwards have used their combination of speed, agility and lethal finishing to etch their name into Premier League history.



ROBBIE FOWLER

Liverpool fans know him simply as God. Fowler burst into the Reds team with five goals in his second career start, and he then went on to add a hat-trick in his fifth league game. He continued in much the same vein for the rest of his career, scoring 163 Premier League goals. Fowler was an opportunist, pouncing on half chances and finishing moves with accurate shots from either foot.

IMAGE - © Mike Hewitt / Allsport / Getty



JÜRGEN KLINSMANN

Klinsmann's reputation preceded him when he joined Tottenham Hotspur in 1994. The German striker was known for going down easily and trying to con referees into giving him a penalty, and some fans didn't respond well to the signing. But Klinsmann won over his doubters after he scored on his debut and celebrated with a self-deprecating diving celebration. The man they called 'Flipper' transformed into a fan favourite, scoring 29 goals in 56 PL games for Spurs.

IMAGE - © Allsport / Getty

RUUD VAN NISTELROOY

It took van Nistelrooy two attempts to join Manchester United. His first transfer fell apart after he failed a fitness test – and then the following day, he ruptured his ACL. He went on to regain full fitness and finally got his dream move to United a year later. Throughout his five seasons at Old Trafford, van Nistelrooy scored 150 goals in 219 games and became the club's highest goalscorer in European competition.

IMAGE - © PA Images / Alamy



GIANFRANCO ZOLA

Diminutive striker Zola was one of several European players brought to Chelsea by player-manager Ruud Gullit, and he helped transform the club. Zola tended to play in a supporting role, using his phenomenal dribbling skills to wrong-foot defenders and provide easy chances for his striking partners. Though he never won the league with Chelsea, his influence on the team was so immense that he was voted the club's greatest ever player in 2003.

IMAGE - © Gary M. Prior / Getty Images





ANDREW COLE

King Cole scored 68 goals in 84 matches in all competitions for Newcastle United before a shock £7 million transfer to Manchester United in January 1995 broke the British transfer record. In his six seasons at Old Trafford, Cole scored 93 goals in 195 Premier League games as United won five league titles. Many of his goals came via his trademark ‘Cole turn’ – a move that left defenders flat-footed and gave Cole a one-on-one with the keeper.

IMAGE - © Stu Forster / Allsport / Getty

ROMELU LUKAKU



A large and physically powerful striker with a remarkable scoring record, Lukaku has bounced around the Premier League, pulling on the shirt for Chelsea, West Bromwich Albion, Everton and Manchester United. Although he’s never found a long-term home, Lukaku’s nomadic existence meant that he was once the player with the highest cumulative total transfer fees.

IMAGE - © Han Yan / Xinhua / Alamy



JERMAIN DEFOE

A goalscorer who made the bulk of his Premier League starts for Tottenham Hotspur, Defoe has 162 Premier League goals to his name despite his style of play going out of fashion during the first two decades of the 21st century. Most teams had turned away from impish penalty-box lurkers like Defoe in favour of bigger, more complete athletes. But Defoe bucked the trend, getting into double figures for goals scored during nine different league campaigns.

IMAGE - © SCFotos - Football Stock / Alamy

“HE WAS EQUALLY HAPPY TO SCORE A TAP-IN AS HE WAS A 30-YARD SCREAMER”



IAN WRIGHT

Wright achieved great things with Crystal Palace, propelling them into the FA Cup final and to third place in the old First Division. By the time the Premier League was formed, Wright had made the move to Arsenal. He was the Gunners’ top scorer for six seasons in a row and helped them to a league and cup double in 1998. Wright had an eye for goal, equally happy to score a tap-in as he was a 30-yard screamer.

IMAGE - © Shaun Botterill / Allsport / Getty

JAMIE VARDY



In 2012, Leicester City plucked Vardy from non-league Fleetwood Town. His goals helped the Foxes win promotion to the Premier League, and in 2015-16, his 24 goals helped seal the title. Vardy boasts an excellent shot and superb positional awareness, but he also draws on his lower-league roots as a no-nonsense striker who gets the ball in the net by any means necessary.

IMAGE - © Cosmin Iftode / Alamy

LES FERDINAND

A well-travelled striker, Ferdinand played in the Premier League for six different clubs, but scored most of his goals for Queens Park Rangers and Newcastle United. He was quick and strong in the air, preferring to muscle his way towards goal rather than relying on speed and trickery. It was a technique that worked. Ferdinand reached 100 Premier League goals within five seasons of the league’s formation.

IMAGE - © Gary Prior / Allsport / Getty Images



Images Getty; Alamy; Shutterstock

SERGIO AGÜERO

When it comes to Man City's diminutive Argentine destroyer, we swear you'll never see anything like him ever again

You don't need to be Pep Guardiola to appreciate that strikers are ultimately judged by goals, and when it comes to finding the back of the net, few forwards of the modern game could compete with Sergio Agüero. As industrious as he was clinical, the former City number 10 will forever be remembered for that title-winning goal against QPR in 2012. However, while that was without doubt his finest moment in sky blue, it was one of many sublime achievements in a record-setting Premier League career that spanned a decade.

From scoring four goals in a match on three separate occasions to winning an unprecedented seven Player of the Month awards and scoring more goals than any other overseas player in the history of England's top flight, Agüero is in a league of his own, a smiling assassin forever cherished by the fans whose lives he changed forever.



SWANNING AROUND

When City parted with £35 million to secure the services of a 23-year-old Agüero, there was perhaps an expectation that he'd take some time to adjust to the Premier League. And he did – nine minutes to be precise. Having replaced Nigel de Jong just before the hour mark, Agüero slid home his first league goal less than ten minutes later and then provided an acrobatic assist for David Silva. He rounded off a stunning debut at home to Swansea with a long-range strike.





GOAL HERO

SERGIO AGÜERO

> *“AGÜERO IS IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN, A SMILING ASSASSIN FOREVER CHERISHED BY THE FANS WHOSE LIVES HE CHANGED FOREVER”*

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 2 June 1988
BIRTHPLACE Buenos Aires, Argentina
NATIONALITY Argentinian
HEIGHT 173cm (5'8")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Manchester City (2011-21)
NUMBER 10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- **x5** PREMIER LEAGUE
- **x1** FA CUP
- **x6** LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **12** PREMIER LEAGUE HAT-TRICKS, THE MOST IN PL HISTORY
- **184** GOALS SCORED IN 275 PL APPEARANCES, OR 0.67 PER MATCH
- **108** MINUTES-PER-GOAL RATIO IN THE PL

FUN FACT

Chelsea almost signed Agüero in 2010, but their bid of around £40 million was rejected by Atlético Madrid.



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** MatchDay Images Limited / Alamy **Boxout image** Associated Press / Alamy **Left** MatchDay Images Limited / Alamy



AGÜEROOOOO!

In arguably the most iconic moment in PL history, Agüero held his nerve to rifle home a stoppage-time winner against QPR to snatch the title away from rivals Manchester United in the dying seconds of the 2011-12 season and spark bedlam at the Etihad.

> "WHEN IT COMES TO PURE NUMBERS, AGÜERO STANDS ALONE AT THE SUMMIT"

BACK WITH A BANG

Every striker dreams of netting a hat-trick, but for an elite few, three just isn't enough. Prior to a home game against Newcastle in October 2015, Agüero hadn't found the net from open play in almost 600 minutes, but it didn't take him long to put that right against the Magpies. A ruthless display began on 42 minutes when Agüero crashed a diving header past Tim Krul and ended 20 minutes later with a fifth goal for the Argentine as City ran out 6-1 winners.

FUN FACT

Agüero won the Golden Boot in the 2014-15 season with an astonishing 26 goals in 33 appearances.







HE CAME HE SCORED HE CONQUERED



The list of lethal foreign goalscorers in the PL is a long and illustrious roll call that includes the likes of Thierry Henry, Didier Drogba and Luis Suárez. However, when it comes to pure numbers, Agüero stands alone at the summit. In a glittering career in England he bagged an astonishing 184 league goals in 275 games, and on 12 January 2020 he became the highest-scoring overseas player when he scored a hat-trick at Villa Park.

Images Shutterstock; **Images (clockwise from top)** Simon Bellis / Associated Press / Alamy; Darren Staples / Associated Press / Alamy; PA Images / Alamy; Associated Press / Alamy



TONY ADAMS

Mr Arsenal himself, Tony Adams was the very embodiment of defensive brilliance across three decades

"That sums it all up," commentator Martin Tyler smiled as Tony Adams scored the final goal in Arsenal's 1997-98 Premier League-winning season against Everton. The Gunners captain celebrated with arms outstretched, in an iconic pose that would be made into a statue outside the Emirates Stadium.

It was just one crowning moment across 20 years of consistency, reliance and leadership. Adams won four league titles with the Gunners, all in very different circumstances: in 1989, a young side clinched it seconds from the death at Anfield, only to dominate the league two years later, with a watertight defence.

By the late 90s, Adams was a stalwart and a rugged genius who could read the game better than anyone at the back. Arsène Wenger leant on him for his brain and his brawn and fans loved him. As Adams once aptly claimed, "If you play for the name on the front of the shirt, they'll remember the name on the back."

DEFENSIVE ROCK

DEFENSIVE ROCK





TONY ADAMS

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 10 October 1966
BIRTHPLACE London, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 191cm (6'3")
POSITION Defender
PL TEAMS Arsenal (1983-2002)
NUMBER 6

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x2 PREMIER LEAGUE
x3 FA CUP
x2 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

21 THE AGE THAT ADAMS BECAME ARSENAL CAPTAIN
32 LEAGUE GOALS SCORED FROM CENTRE-BACK
115 CLEAN SHEETS IN 255 PL GAMES

FUN FACT

Adams was the leader of Arsenal's famed back four, alongside Lee Dixon, Steve Bould and Nigel Winterburn.

FIRST INVINCIBLE

Arsenal went unbeaten in 2003-04 to win the Premier League – but Adams did it 13 years prior. As teammate Paul Merson told *FourFourTwo* magazine, Adams missed the only fixture of the 1990-91 season that the Gunners lost – against Chelsea – keeping his record unblemished in Merson's eyes. "Well, Tony Adams was an Invincible," he said. It's a tribute to how brilliant he was at his best, as the heartbeat of George Graham's impenetrable defence.



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mike Hewitt / Allsport / Getty **Boxout image** Mark Leech / Offside / Getty **Left** Mark Leech / Offside / Getty

MARCUS RASHFORD

Rashford has become a homegrown hero at Old Trafford, inspiring United fans and netting all-important goals

Marcus Rashford got his break during an injury crisis at Manchester United. There was no one else for Louis van Gaal to choose from up front in a crunch match against Arsenal: 90 minutes later, there was no one else United fans wanted in the team more.

Rashford scored twice that afternoon, announcing himself to the Premier League in style. He would go on to take the hallowed No.10 shirt at Old Trafford and become a homegrown hero for the Red Devils, a trusted talisman for José Mourinho, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and, eventually, Erik ten Hag.

But in addition to what Rashford would achieve on the football field, his charitable work away from the game would earn him millions of admirers. This is a man with explosive speed and an eye for goal that can't be taught – yet behind it all is a humble, honest and hardworking forward, who has never taken his talent for granted.

> *"HE WOULD GO ON TO TAKE THE HALLOWED NO.10 SHIRT AT OLD TRAFFORD AND BECOME A HOMEGROWN HERO FOR THE RED DEVILS"*



A SCREAMER AGAINST CHELSEA

The similarities between Rashford and Cristiano Ronaldo are obvious – and the former emulated the latter with a stunning goal against Chelsea in 2019. From a free-kick, the Manchester United forward smacked the ball with the side of his foot rather than his instep, watching the ball float in from distance. It was one of the goals of the season – and a moment that cemented Rashford as one of England's best ball-strikers.

WING WIZARD



WING WIZARD

MARCUS RASHFORD

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	31 October 1997
BIRTHPLACE	Manchester, England
NATIONALITY	English
HEIGHT	180cm (5'11")
POSITION	Forward
PL TEAMS	Manchester United (2015-present)
NUMBER	10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x2	FA CUP
x2	LEAGUE CUP

% STATS & RECORDS

122	GOALS AND ASSISTS IN 272 PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES
3	GOALS AND ASSISTS ON HIS PREMIER LEAGUE DEBUT AGAINST ARSENAL
18	AGE ON HIS PREMIER LEAGUE DEBUT

FUN FACT

Rashford released an award-winning children's book called *You Are a Champion* in 2022.



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** Paul Terry / Sportimage / Associated Press / Alamy **Left** Mark Pain / Alamy



HARRY KANE

The relentless goal machine who was one of Tottenham's own – until he wasn't

"He's one of our own, he's one of our own. Harry Kane – he's one of our own." Those chants rang out across White Hart Lane, Wembley and the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium for over a decade in honour of the real Harry Hotspur – Harry Kane.

Local lad Kane buried 21 Premier League goals in his first full season, following that up with 25, 29 and 30 in successive seasons to establish himself as the one of the world's premier marksmen. Kane quickly became a Tottenham icon, breaking the club's all-time goalscoring record and passing 200 Premier League goals. He earned three Golden Boots, the Playmaker award and seven Player of the Months. However, his team trophy cabinet remained bare and two seasons after Manchester City's approaches were rebuffed, Kane departed for European giants Bayern Munich. Kane left just 47 goals short of Alan Shearer's all-time Premier League goalscoring tally. Few would bet on Kane not to come back and break that record as well.

FUN FACT

Kane has scored more goals in Premier League North London derbies than any other player, with 14.

GOAL HERO

HARRY KANE





Above Despite lots of personal awards and achievements, Kane hasn't got a team trophy – yet

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 28 July 1993
BIRTHPLACE London, England
NATIONALITY English
HEIGHT 188cm (6'2")
POSITION Forward
PL TEAMS Tottenham Hotspur (2009-23)
NUMBER 10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

N/A

STATS & RECORDS

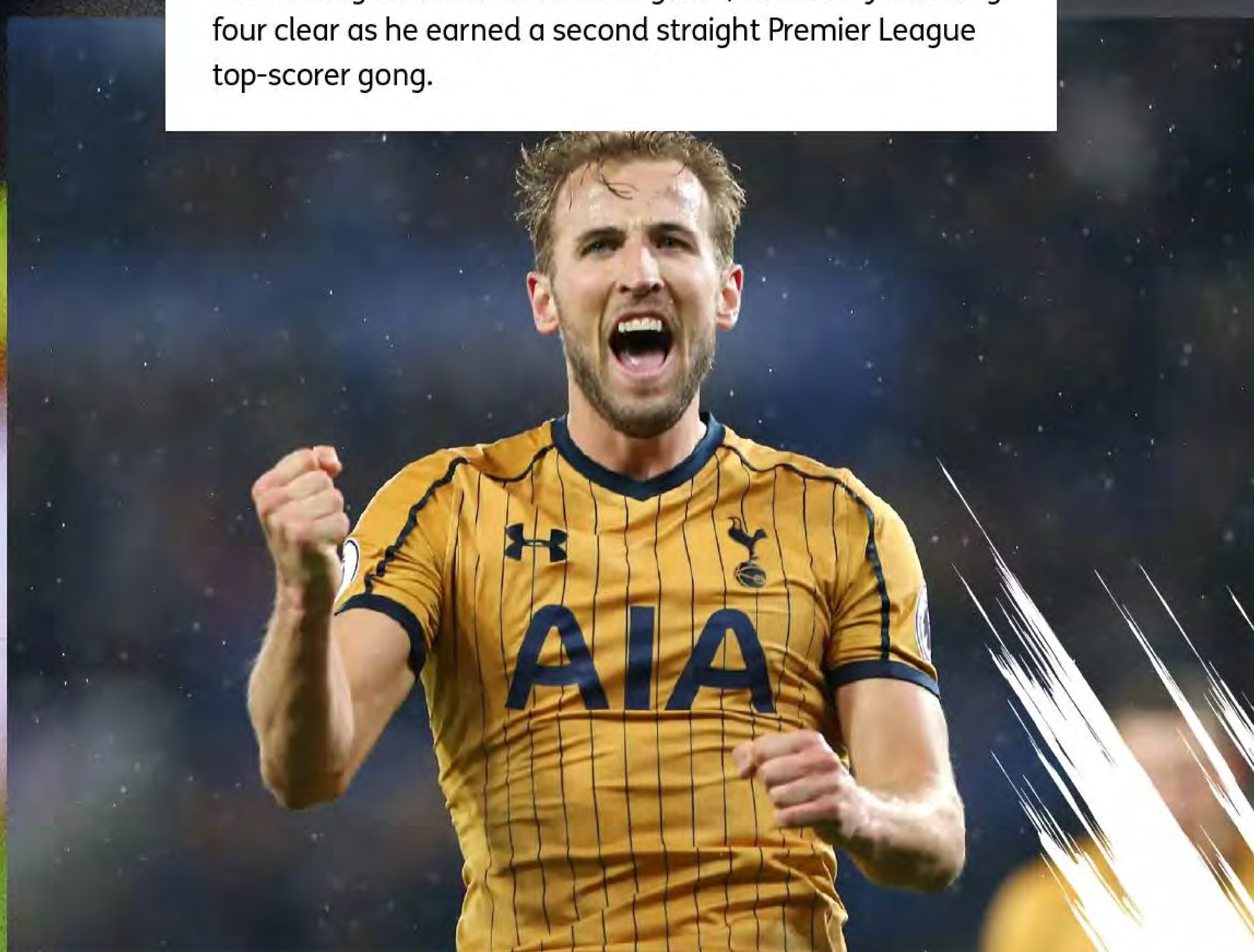
213 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS

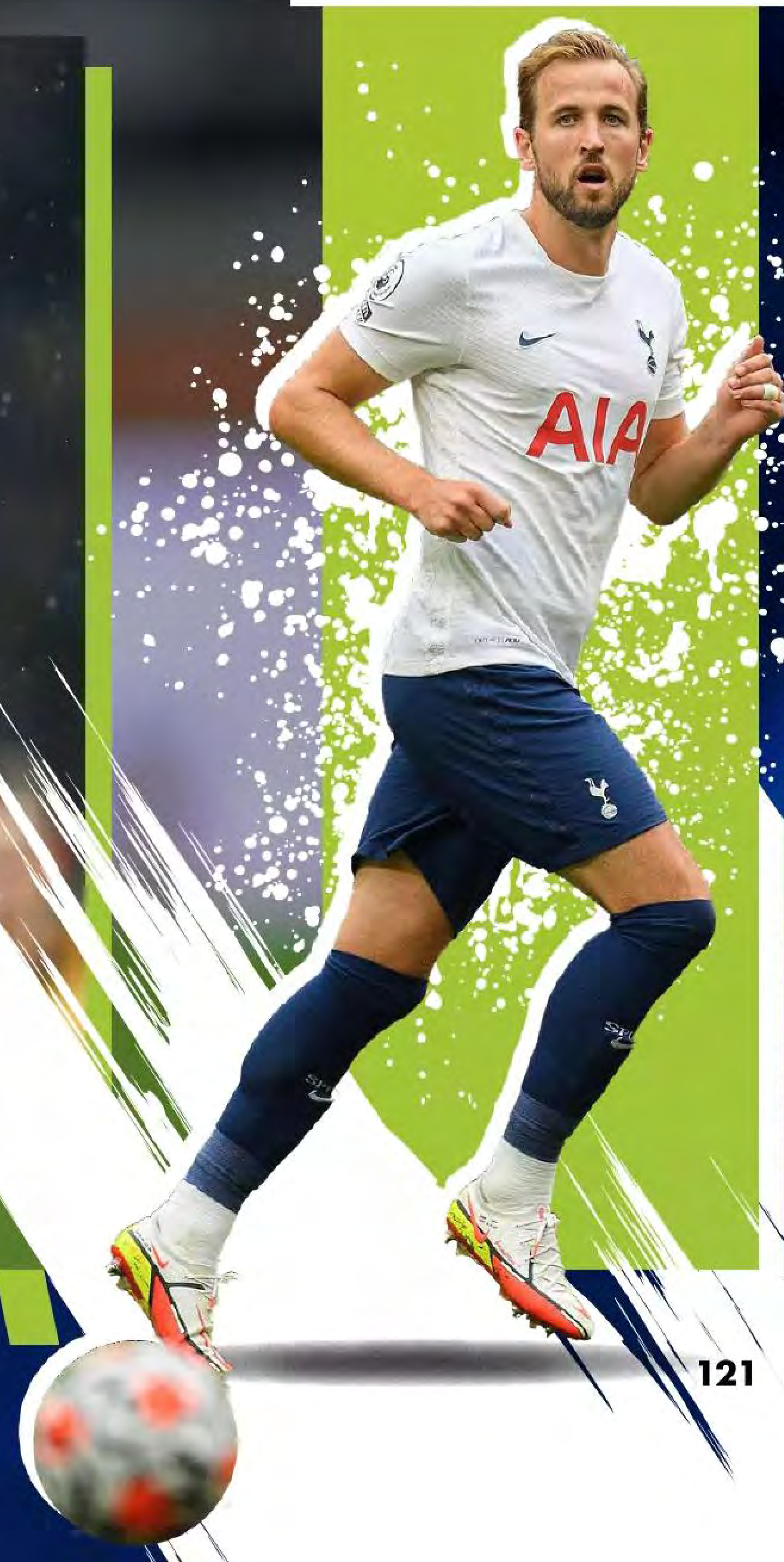
0.67 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS PER GAME

46 PREMIER LEAGUE ASSISTS

KANE'S GOLDEN STREAK

With two games of the 2016-17 Premier League season left, Kane was two goals behind Everton's Romelu Lukaku in the race for the Golden Boot. No matter for him as he crashed four past Leicester and followed that up with a hat-trick against Hull in the final game, eventually finishing four clear as he earned a second straight Premier League top-scorer gong.





Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Mark Pain / Alamy **Boxout image** David Klein / Sportimage Ltd / Alamy **Left** Mark Pain / Alamy ; **Inset** Paul Marriott / Alamy



THE BI-CENTENNIAL MAN

Before Kane, only two men had broken the 200-goal mark in the Premier League – Alan Shearer and Wayne Rooney. His landmark came in the 15th minute against champions (and former suitors) Manchester City. A right-foot shot across Ederson not only secured a vital win, but was his 200th Premier League goal and a record-breaking 267th for Tottenham. Not a bad night's work.

FUN FACT

Harry Kane has scored back-to-back Premier League hat-tricks twice. No other player has managed that feat.

"KANE QUICKLY BECAME A TOTTENHAM ICON, BREAKING THE CLUB'S ALL-TIME GOALSCORING RECORD AND PASSING 200 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS"



WHERE IT ALL STARTED

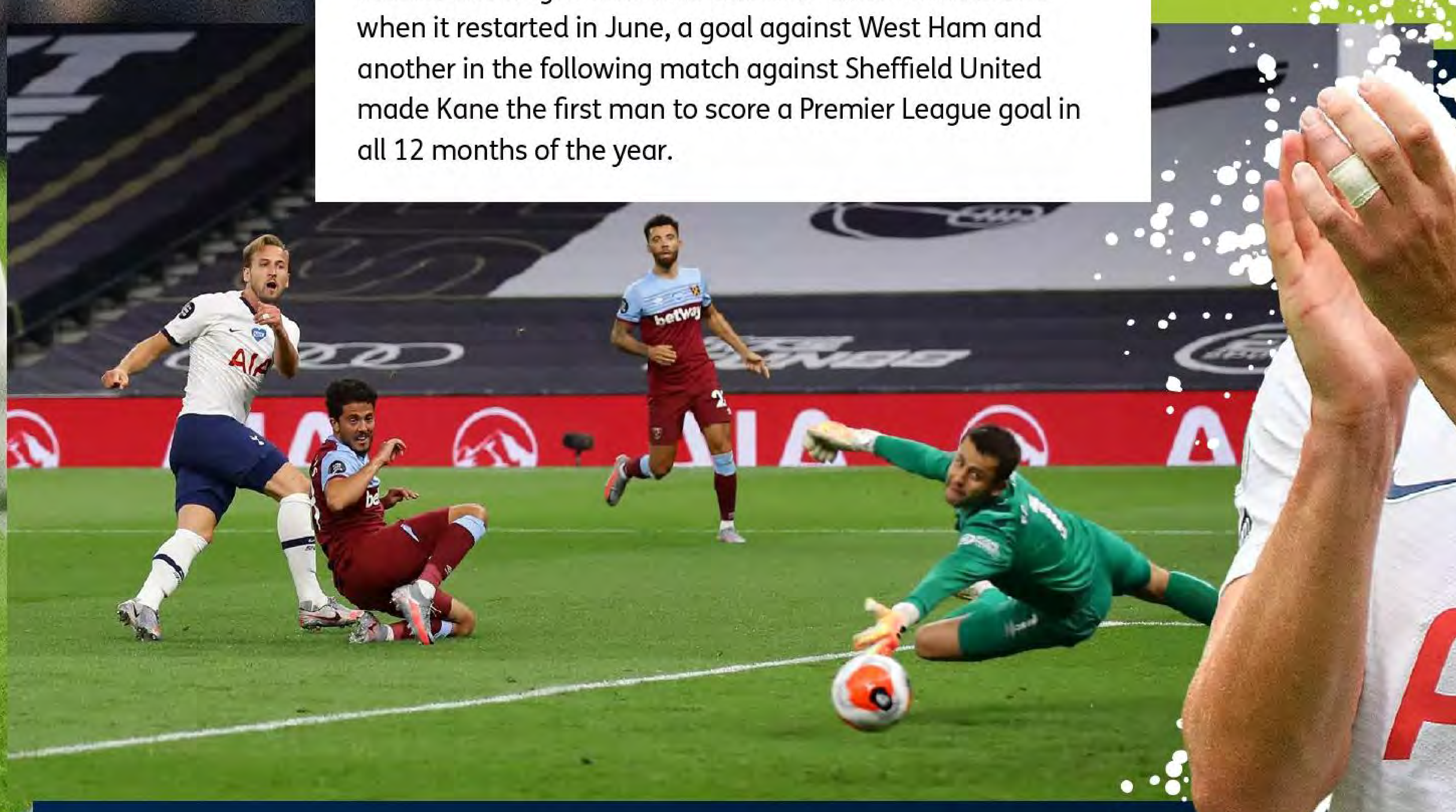
With £26m signing Roberto Soldado stinking up White Hart Lane, manager Tim Sherwood gave 20-year-old Kane his chance up front with Emmanuel Adebayor against Sunderland in April 2014. In the 59th minute, a low cross from Christian Eriksen was stabbed in by Kane for his first Premier League goal. Kane being Kane, he followed that up with goals in his next two games as well.

FUN FACT

Kane has scored 30 goals in a Premier League season twice – but both times didn't win the Golden Boot.

ALL YEAR ROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic was horrendous for so many reasons, but did give Kane the chance to secure a unique record. The league was shut down for three months and when it restarted in June, a goal against West Ham and another in the following match against Sheffield United made Kane the first man to score a Premier League goal in all 12 months of the year.





Images Shutterstock; **Images (Clockwise from left)** Mark Pain / Alamy; David Klein / Sportimage / Associated Press / Alamy; Mark Pain / Alamy; David Klein / Sportimage via PA Images / Alamy

MICHAEL OWEN

At his peak, he was one of the greatest goalscorers the Premier League has ever seen

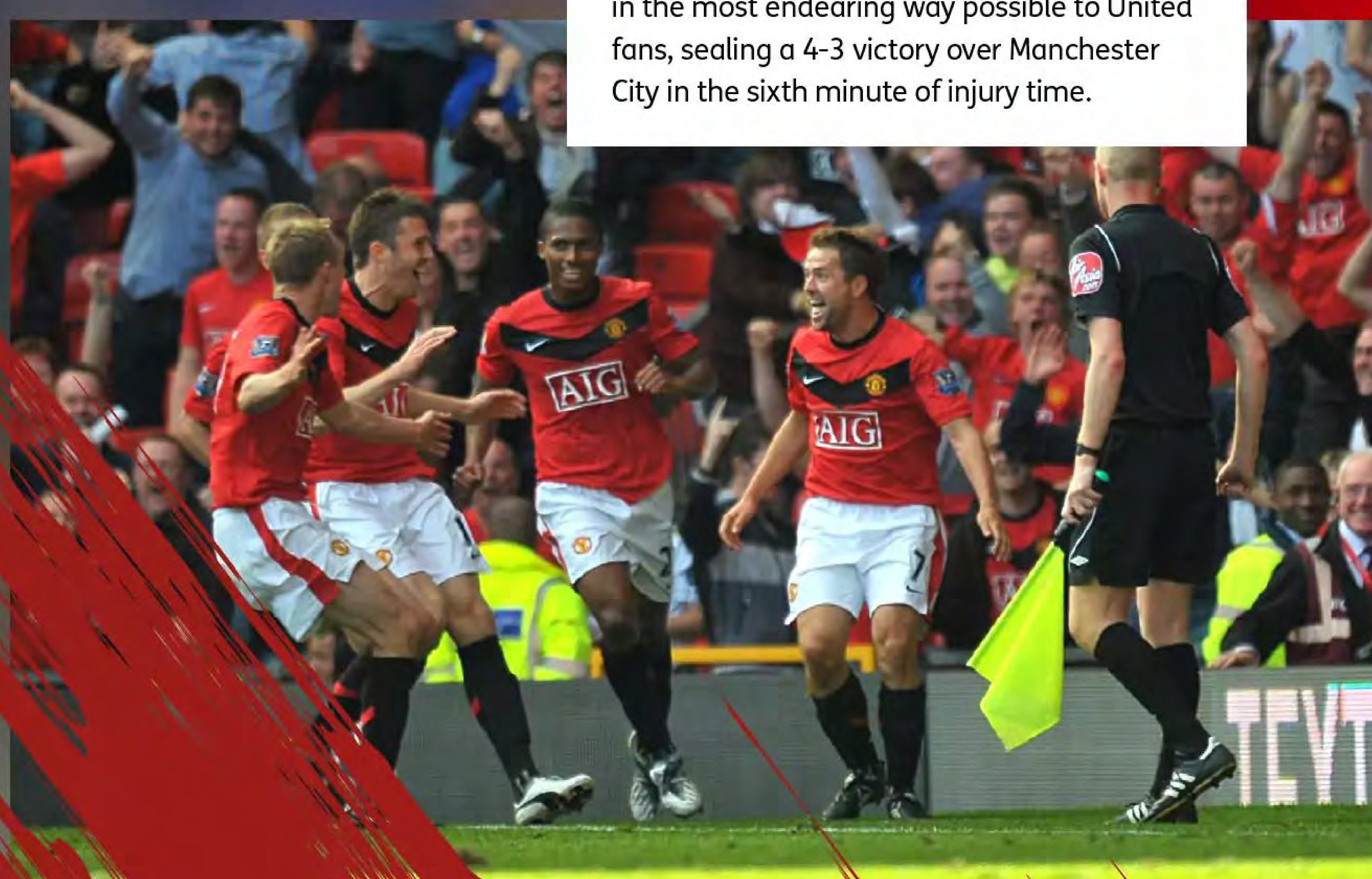
One of the best strikers of his generation in not only the Premier League, but the world too, it's nevertheless easy to forget just how good a player Michael Owen was.

During his time at Liverpool he was often bordering on unplayable. After scoring on his full debut at the close of the 1996-97 season at the age of 17, he never looked back, topping the scoring charts at Anfield in every one of his subsequent seven seasons at the club. His lightning-quick pace and agility made him a nightmare for defenders, and saw him gain wider recognition in the form of the Ballon d'Or in 2001.


Upon his return to the Premier League from Real Madrid in 2005, persistent injury problems meant he never managed to achieve a repeat of the performances that had made him such a shining light at Liverpool. Regardless, we can never forget his brilliant heyday.

MANCHESTER DERBY MADNESS

While he had lost much of his pace by the time he signed for Manchester United in 2009, he hadn't lost his knack of popping up when you needed him. He demonstrated this in the most endearing way possible to United fans, sealing a 4-3 victory over Manchester City in the sixth minute of injury time.



GOAL HERO



MICHAEL OWEN

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH	14 December 1979
BIRTHPLACE	Chester, England
NATIONALITY	English
HEIGHT	173cm (5'7")
POSITION	Forward
PL TEAMS	Liverpool (1996-2004), Newcastle United (2005-09), Manchester United (2009-12), Stoke City (2012-13)
NUMBER	10

DOMESTIC HONOURS

- **x1** PREMIER LEAGUE
- **x1** FA CUP
- **x2** LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

- **150** PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS
- **2** PREMIER LEAGUE GOLDEN BOOT AWARDS
- **0.46** PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS PER GAME

> **"AFTER SCORING ON HIS FULL DEBUT AT THE CLOSE OF THE 1996-97 SEASON AT THE AGE OF 17, HE NEVER LOOKED BACK"**

FUN FACT

He starred as himself in the 2007 movie, *Goal II: Living the Dream.*



Images Shutterstock; **Main image** Offside / Getty **Boxout image** PA Images / Alamy **Left** PA Images / Alamy



KEVIN DE BRUYNE

De Bruyne would become the very image of Manchester City – and win everything there is to in the process

When Kevin De Bruyne left Chelsea, he'd barely been given a chance in English football. It was a ruthless sale by the Blues, moving the Belgian on to the Bundesliga instead. It was an origin story that made De Bruyne just as ruthless in his own right.

The playmaker's consistency ever since moving to Manchester City has been nothing short of astonishing. While the No.10 is traditionally a languid, mercurial player who can float in and out of games, De Bruyne has reinvented the role with robotic rigour, sparking Pep Guardiola's City to unscalable heights.

Before KDB, the debate was between Gerrard, Lampard and Scholes for the Premier League's greatest-ever midfielder. Now, De Bruyne's well in the mix: for some, he's some way ahead. He's won everything – and he's changed the very expectation of what a creator should be.

> **"DE BRUYNE HAS REINVENTED THE NO.10 ROLE WITH ROBOTIC RIGOUR, SPARKING PEP'S CITY TO UNSCALABLE HEIGHTS"**

MIDFIELD MAESTRO

MIDFIELD MAESTRO



THE CENTURION SEASON

De Bruyne was Manchester City's outstanding performer in 2017-18, inspiring the Citizens to an unprecedented 100 points, as Guardiola won his first title in English football. The Belgian assisted 16 goals across the season – but perhaps his most important was for Gabriel Jesus to beat Southampton on the final day of the season, reaching that mythical milestone of a century of points. He was unplayable that campaign.

FUN FACT

De Bruyne was the first-ever Manchester City star to win the PFA Player of the Year award.

Below Chelsea's discarding of De Bruyne has benefitted Manchester City



KEVIN DE BRUYNE

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 28 June 1991
BIRTHPLACE Drongen, Belgium
NATIONALITY Belgian
HEIGHT 181cm (5'11")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS Chelsea (2012-14), Manchester City (2015-present)
NUMBER 17

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x6	PREMIER LEAGUE
x2	FA CUP
x5	LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

112	ALL-TIME ASSISTS IN THE PREMIER LEAGUE
20	ASSISTS IN THE 2019-20 SEASON, A JOINT PL RECORD
3	PLAYMAKER OF THE SEASON AWARDS FOR MOST ASSISTS IN A PL SEASON





FUN FACT

Fernandes is a midfielder now but he began his football career as a centre-back.

BRUNO FERNANDES

Following in the footsteps of some true greats, Fernandes is the man that makes the modern Manchester United team tick

Bruno Fernandes arrived at Manchester United from Sporting Lisbon and he made an immediate impact. So much so, he won Manchester United's Sir Matt Busby Player of the Year award following his first season at the club (2019-20) even though he'd only played half a season (he won the prestigious accolade the following year, too).

During his time at United, Fernandes has proven himself to be a match winner. He's best known for posing a threat going forward, particularly in the final third – in 2020-21 he scored 18 Premier League goals from midfield and during the 2022-23 campaign he created a staggering 119 chances. He has a strong right foot, an aggressive passing style and is also a prolific penalty taker, having scored 19 in the Premier League prior to the 2024-25 season.

What's more, he has become a galvanising force for his team, which is why he was appointed Manchester United captain in July 2023. Setting high standards and showing great ambition, he's become something of a cult hero among fans.

CREATIVE FORCE





BRUNO FERNANDES

BIO

DATE OF BIRTH 8 September 1994
BIRTHPLACE Maia, Portugal
NATIONALITY Portuguese
HEIGHT 179cm (5'10")
POSITION Midfielder
PL TEAMS Manchester United (2020-present)
NUMBER 8

DOMESTIC HONOURS

x1 FA CUP

x1 LEAGUE CUP

STATS & RECORDS

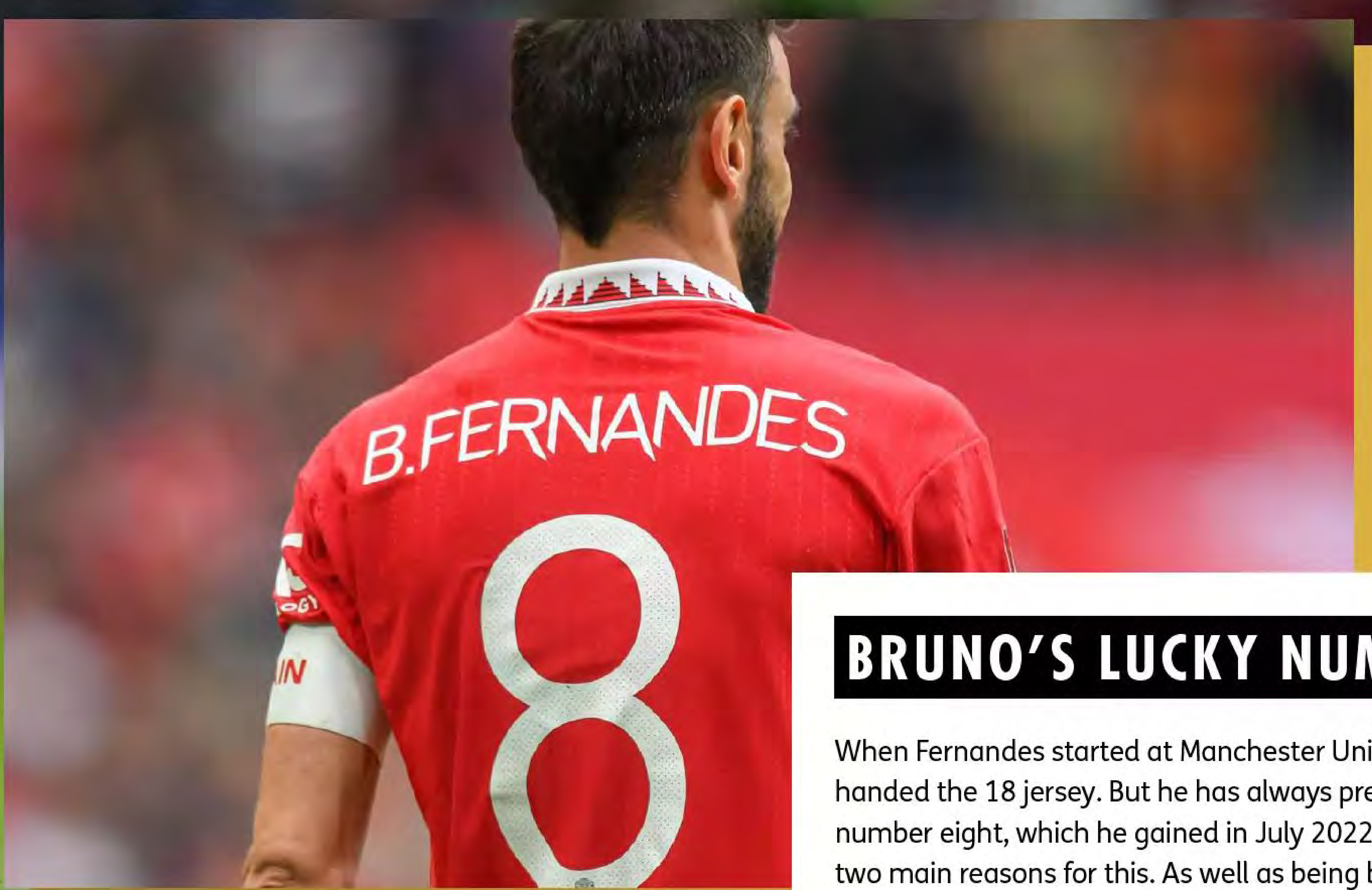
0.34 PREMIER LEAGUE GOALS PER GAME

95 COMBINED PL GOALS AND ASSISTS IN HIS FIRST 159 GAMES

83% PL PENALTY CONVERSION RATE

"HE'S BEST KNOWN FOR POSING A THREAT GOING FORWARD, PARTICULARLY IN THE FINAL THIRD"

Above Fernandes is a box-to-box playmaker and risk-taker who has become one of Manchester United's recent stars



BRUNO'S LUCKY NUMBER

When Fernandes started at Manchester United, he was handed the 18 jersey. But he has always preferred number eight, which he gained in July 2022. There are two main reasons for this. As well as being born on the eighth, eight was the number his late father wore during his own playing career.



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PREMIER LEAGUE ALL-STARS

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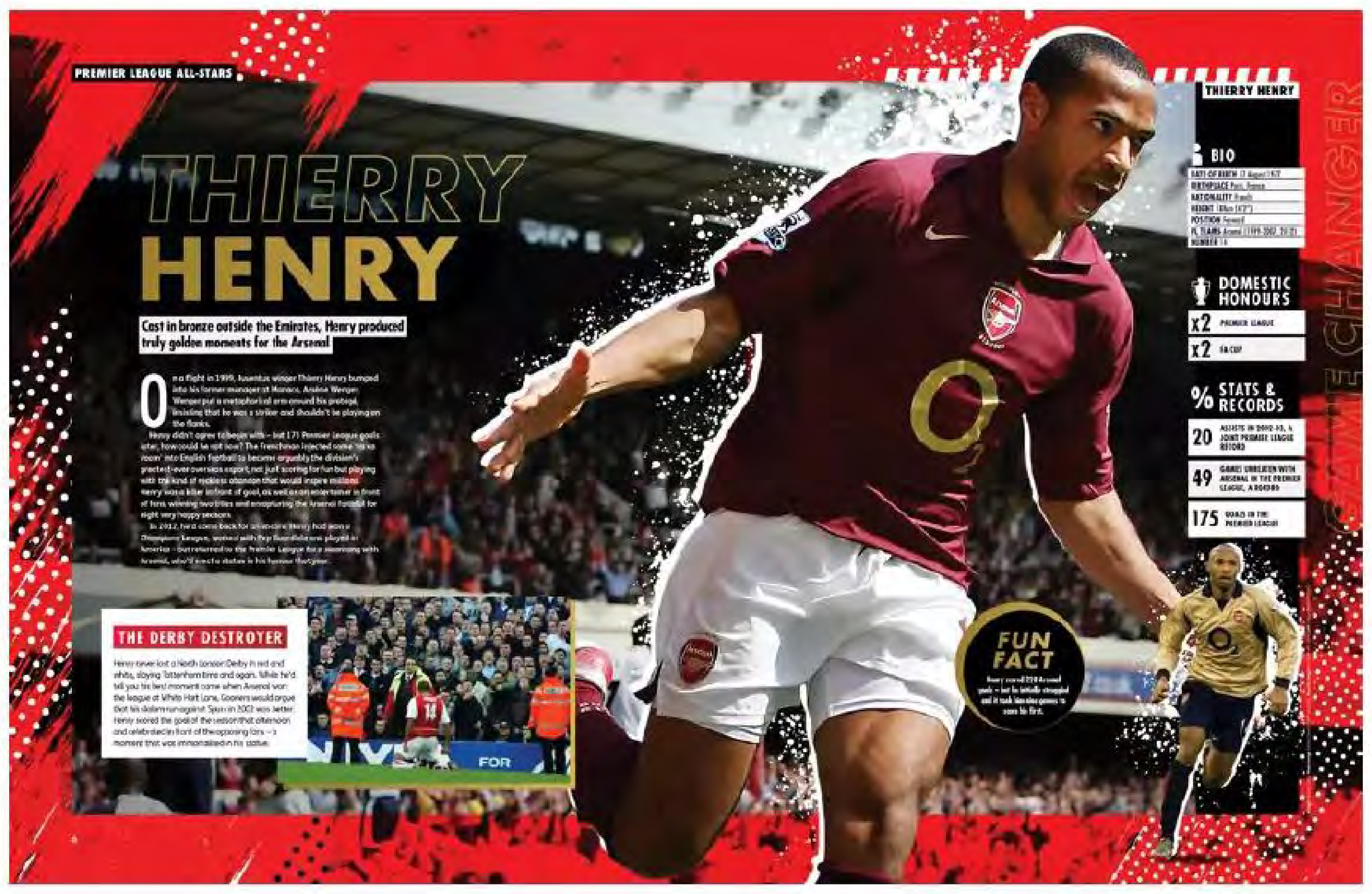
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PREMIER LEAGUE ALL-STARS
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PREMIER LEAGUE ALL-STARS



GAME CHANGERS

From Dennis Bergkamp and Eric Cantona to Mo Salah and more, meet the Premier League's great innovators



MIDFIELD MAESTROS

Discover the midfield generals, creative forces and all-rounders who make their teams tick



GOAL HEROES

From Alan Shearer to Erling Haaland, get to know the strikers who score goals for fun





8 AMAZING POSTERS INSIDE

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